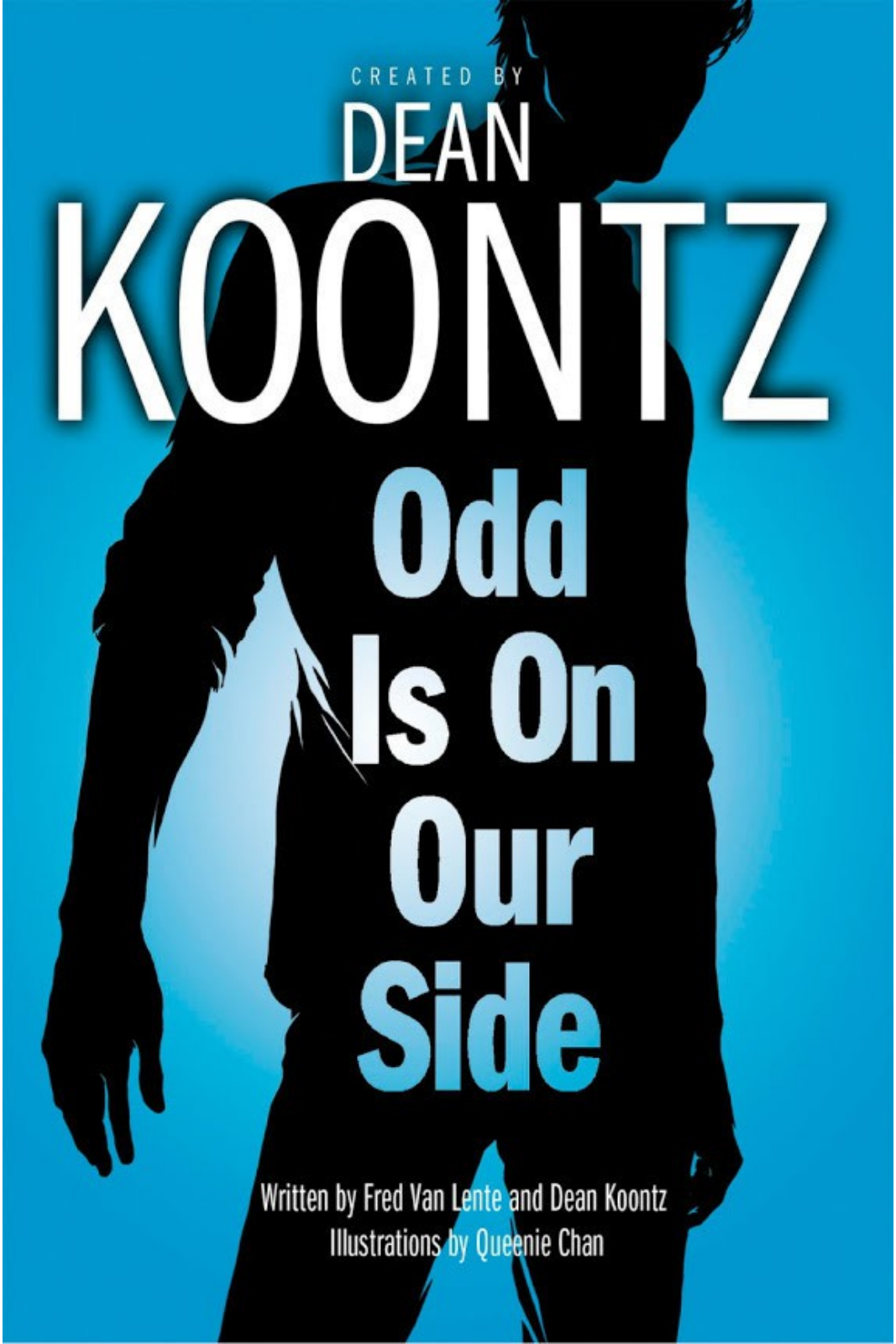


A black silhouette of a person, possibly a dancer or athlete, in a dynamic pose with one arm raised and bent. The background is a solid blue color. The text is overlaid on the silhouette.

CREATED BY
DEAN

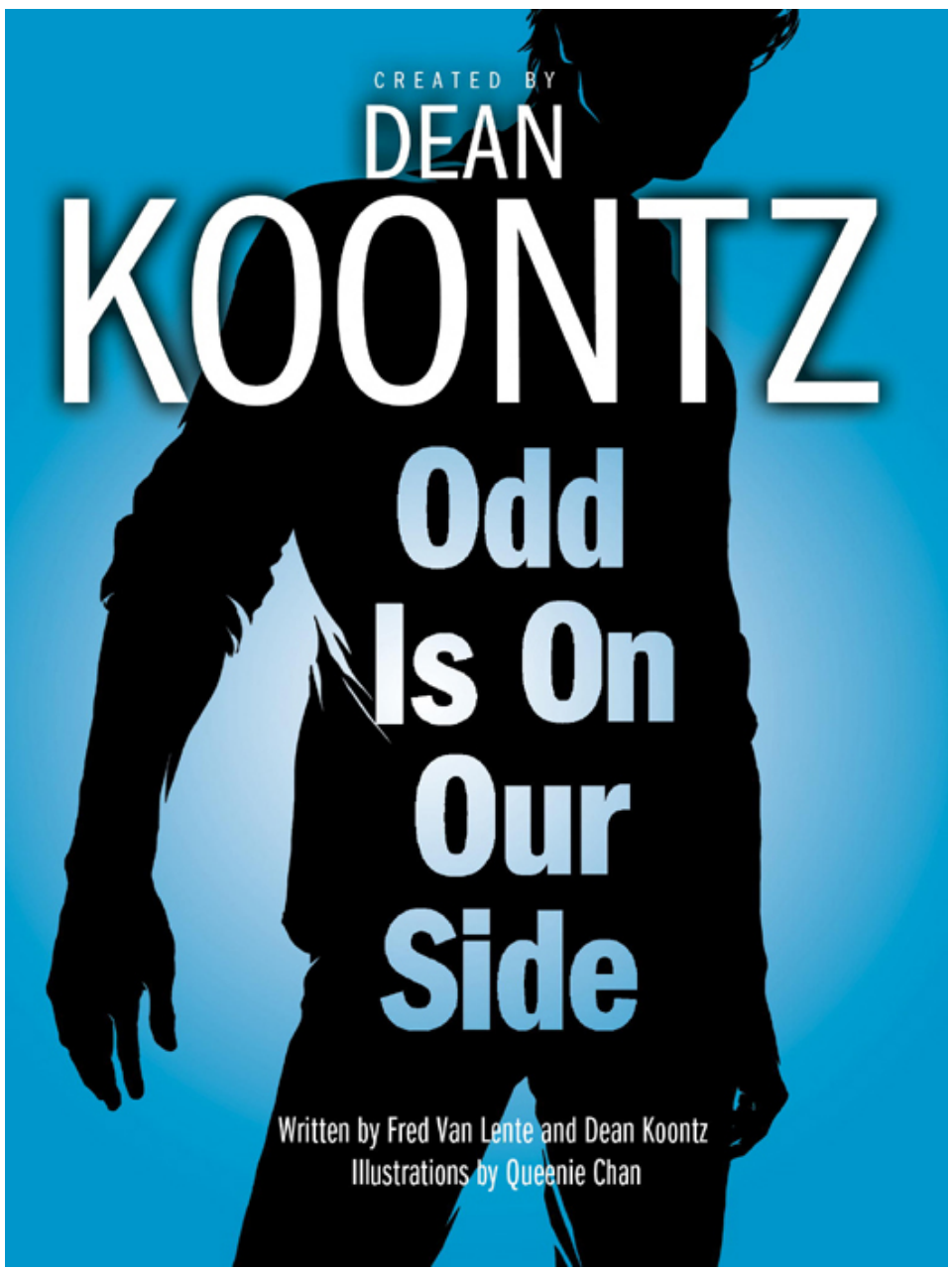
KOONTZ

**Odd
Is On
Our
Side**

Written by Fred Van Lente and Dean Koontz
Illustrations by Queenie Chan

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

A black silhouette of a person, possibly a superhero, in a dynamic pose with one arm extended forward. The background is a solid blue color. The text is overlaid on the silhouette.

CREATED BY

DEAN

KOONTZ

**Odd
Is On
Our
Side**

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Illustrations by Queenie Chan

Odd Is on Our Side

CREATED BY

DEAN KOONTZ

WRITTEN BY **FRED VAN LENTE** AND **DEAN KOONTZ**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **QUEENIE CHAN**



BALLANTINE BOOKS
NEW YORK

Odd Is on Our Side is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

Also by Dean Koontz

Breathless • Relentless • Your Heart Belongs to Me • Odd Hours • The Darkest Evening of the Year • The Good Guy • Brother Odd • The Husband • Forever Odd • Velocity • Life Expectancy • The Taking • Odd Thomas • The Face • By the Light of the Moon • One Door Away From Heaven • From the Corner of His Eye • False Memory • Seize the Night • Fear Nothing • Mr. Murder • Dragon Tears • Hideaway • Cold Fire • The Bad Place • Midnight • Lightning • Watchers • Strangers • Twilight Eyes • Darkfall • Phantoms • Whispers • The Mask • The Vision • The Face of Fear • Night Chills • Shattered • The Voice of the Night • The Servants of Twilight • The House of Thunder • The Key to Midnight • The Eyes of Darkness • Shadowfires • Winter Moon • The Door to December • Dark Rivers of the Heart • Icebound • Strange Highways • Intensity • Sole Survivor • Ticktock • The Funhouse • Demon Seed

DEAN KOONTZ'S FRANKENSTEIN

Book One: Prodigal Son

Book Two: City of Night

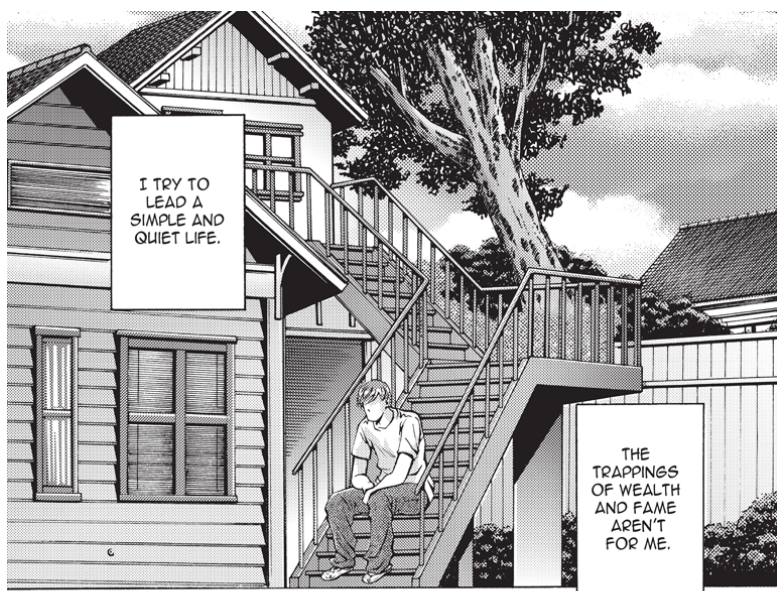
Book Three: Dead and Alive

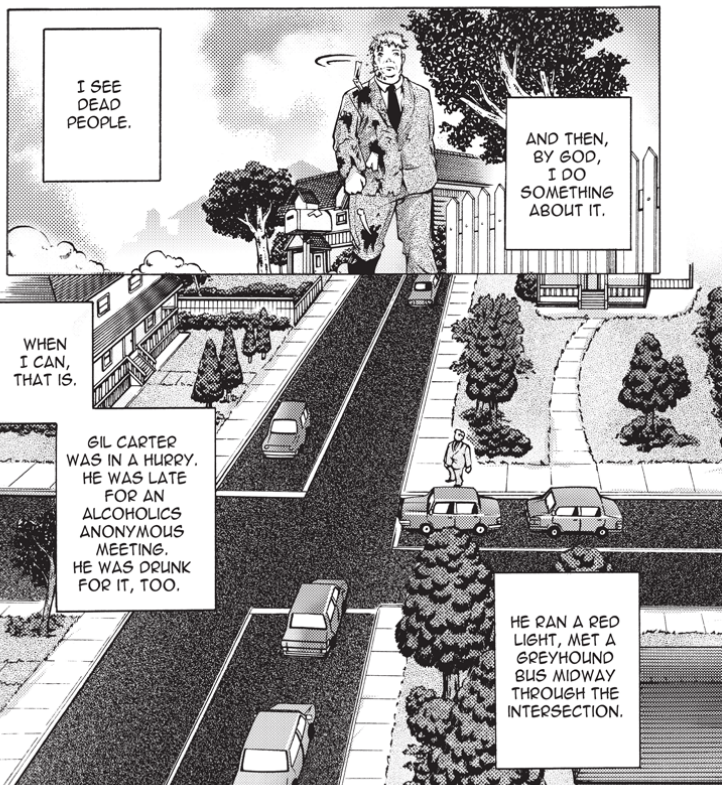
Book Four: Lost Souls

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The Dreaming, volumes 1—3

In Odd We Trust





I SEE
DEAD
PEOPLE.

AND THEN,
BY GOD,
I DO
SOMETHING
ABOUT IT.

WHEN
I CAN,
THAT IS.

GIL CARTER
WAS IN A HURRY.
HE WAS LATE
FOR AN
ALCOHOLICS
ANONYMOUS
MEETING.
HE WAS DRUNK
FOR IT, TOO.

HE RAN A RED
LIGHT, MET A
GREYHOUND
BUS MIDWAY
THROUGH THE
INTERSECTION.



NOW HE'S
A MEMBER OF
ALCOHOLICS
POSTHUMOUS.

THERE'S NOTHING
I CAN DO
FOR HIM.

BUT THAT
DOESN'T
STOP HIM
FROM
ASKING.



THERE'S NO
REASON FOR
YOU TO STAY
HERE. NO
TAVERN SERVES
THE DEAD.

JUST LET GO.
HEAD ON
OVER TO THE
OTHER SIDE.

GIL
AGAIN?

IT'S AS IF
HE THINKS DEATH
IS JUST A
HANGOVER AND
HE NEEDS A
LITTLE WHISKEY
TO GET RIGHT.

IT'S
EASIER
THAN YOU
THINK.



STORMY
LLEWELLYN--
MY GIRLFRIEND,
MY DESTINY--
IS THE ONLY
PERSON,
LIVING OR DEAD,
WHO KNOWS
ALL MY
SECRETS.

WHAT'S
HE DOING
NOW?

RUDE
SPOOK
STUFF.

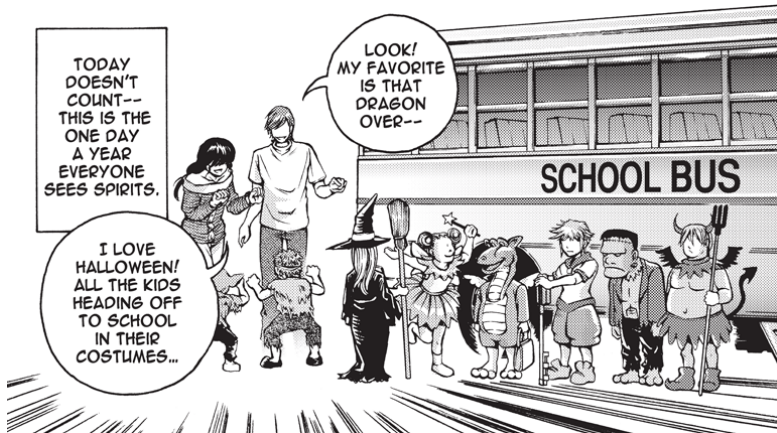
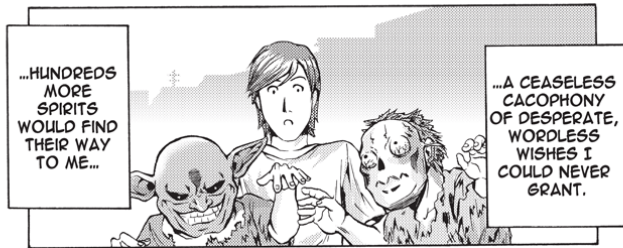
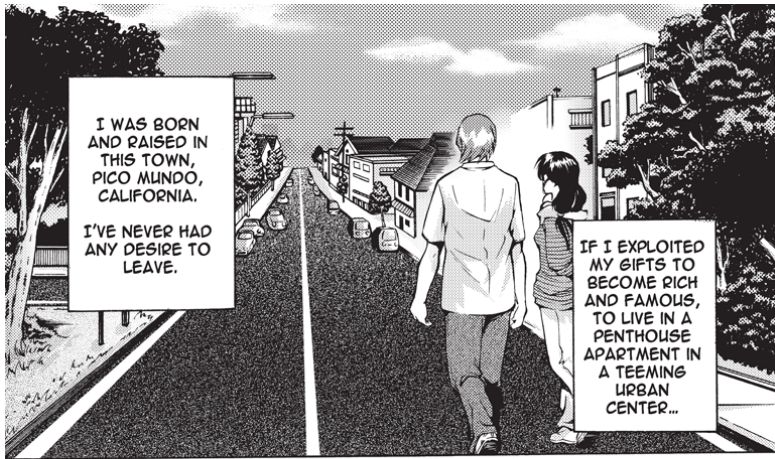
AND I'M THE
ONLY PERSON
ABLE TO CALL
HER BY HER
REAL NAME--
"BRONWEN"--
WITHOUT EARNING
A PUNCH TO
THE GUT.

TELL HIM
HAPPY HOUR
IN HEAVEN IS
FREE AND
LASTS 24/7.

NOT THAT
I'D EVER
DARE TEST
THAT.

WHERE'D YOU
GET YOUR
THEOLOGY DEGREE?
JACK DANIELS
UNIVERSITY?







WHERE
IS IT?



WHERE
DID
IT GO?

MAGGIE!
COME BACK
HERE!
MAGGIE!

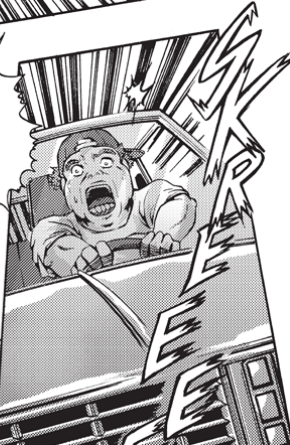
VRRRRRR

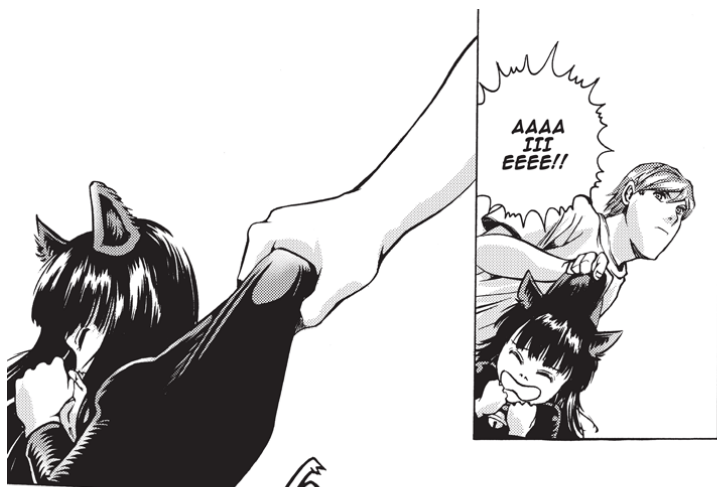


MAG--



LOOK
OUT!!







YOU WERE
ALMOST
ROADKILL.

YOU GOTTA
BE CAREFUL,
KIDDO.
YOU DON'T
HAVE NINE
LIVES.

YOU'RE
GOING TO BE
A TERRIFIC
MOTHER,
ONE DAY.

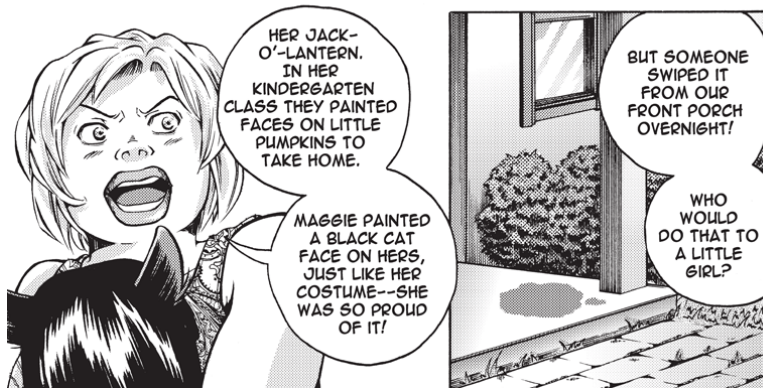
I WANT
MY JACK-O!
SOMEBODY
TOOK MY
JACK-O!



MAGGIE,
DON'T YOU
DARE GIVE ME
A SCARE LIKE
THAT AGAIN!

I'LL NEVER
LOSE A KID
OF MINE
TO A CAR.

IF YOU DID,
I WOULDN'T
WANT TO BE
THE DRIVER.
OR THE CAR.

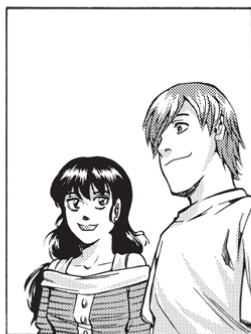


HER JACK-
O'-LANTERN.
IN HER
KINDERGARTEN
CLASS THEY PAINTED
FACES ON LITTLE
PUMPKINS TO
TAKE HOME.

MAGGIE PAINTED
A BLACK CAT
FACE ON HERS,
JUST LIKE HER
COSTUME--SHE
WAS SO PROUD
OF IT!

BUT SOMEONE
SWIPED IT
FROM OUR
FRONT PORCH
OVERNIGHT!

WHO
WOULD
DO THAT TO
A LITTLE
GIRL?



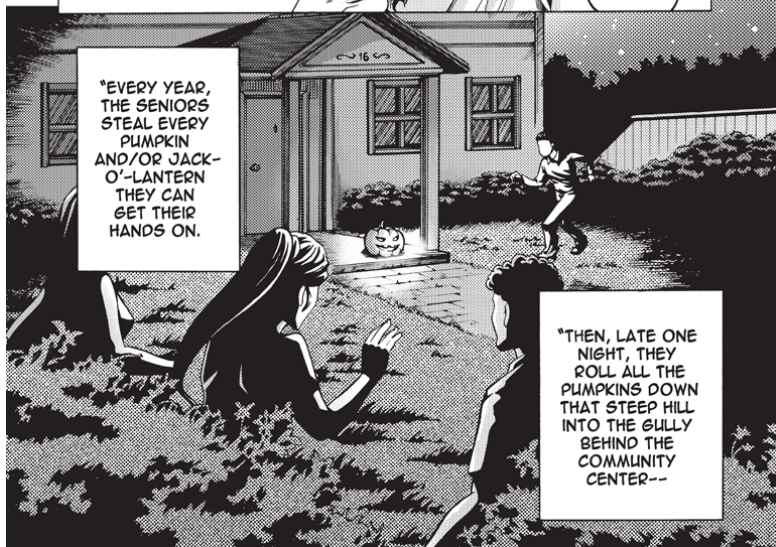
THIS... IS
YOUR FIRST
HALLOWEEN
IN PICO MUNDO,
ISN'T IT?

WE MOVED
HERE IN
APRIL. WHY?

THE
"PUMPKIN
ROLL"...

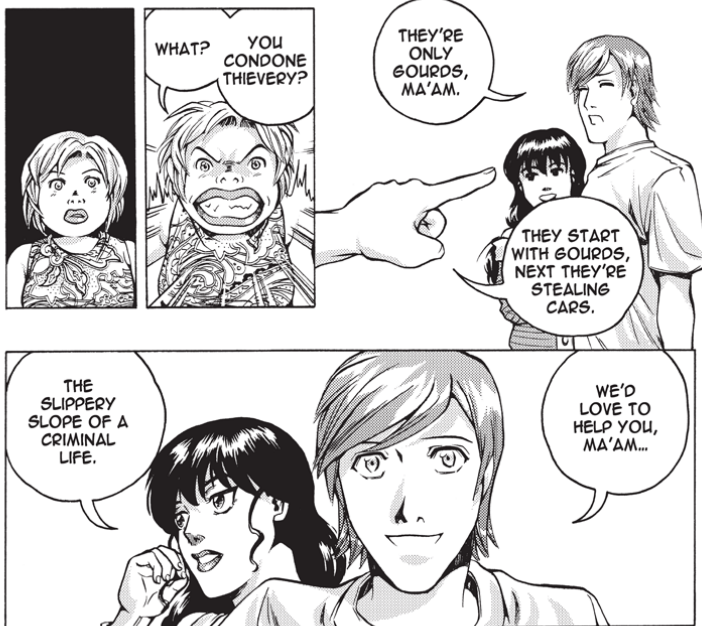
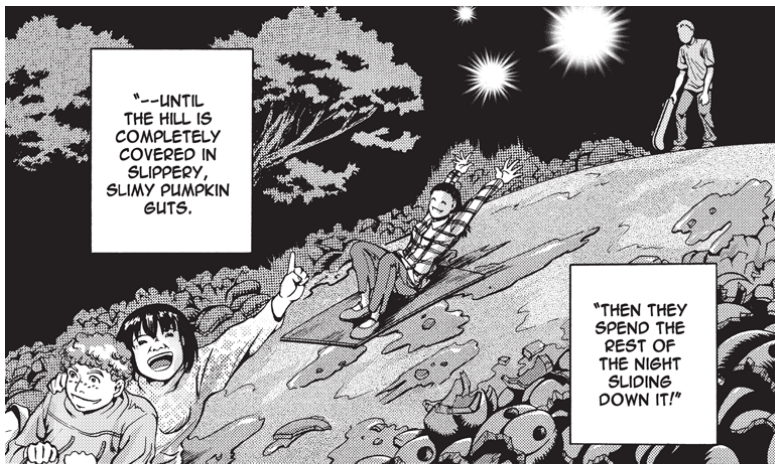
IT'S ONE
OF P. M.
HIGH'S MOST
HALLOWED
TRADITIONS.

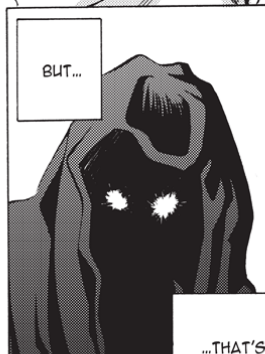
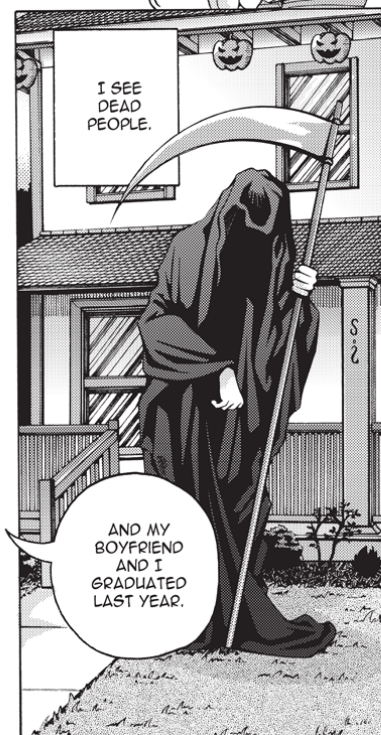
NO PUN
INTENDED.



"EVERY YEAR,
THE SENIORS
STEAL EVERY
PUMPKIN
AND/OR JACK-
O'-LANTERN
THEY CAN
GET THEIR
HANDS ON.

"THEN, LATE ONE
NIGHT, THEY
ROLL ALL THE
PUMPKINS DOWN
THAT STEEP HILL
INTO THE GULLY
BEHIND THE
COMMUNITY
CENTER--







I CALL THEM BODACHS. I HEARD A SIX-YEAR-OLD ENGLISH BOY CALL THEM THAT AFTER SPOTTING ONE.

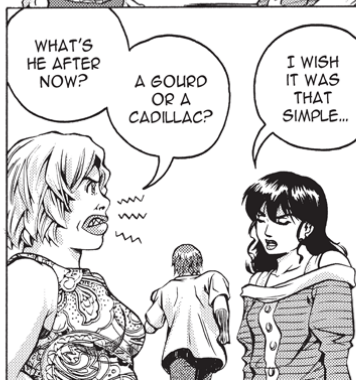


MINUTES BEFORE HE WAS CRUSHED TO DEATH BY A RUNAWAY TRUCK AGAINST A CONCRETE WALL.



THEY WOULDN'T TELL US IF WE ASKED--

!



WHAT'S HE AFTER NOW?

A GOURD OR A CADILLAC?

I WISH IT WAS THAT SIMPLE...



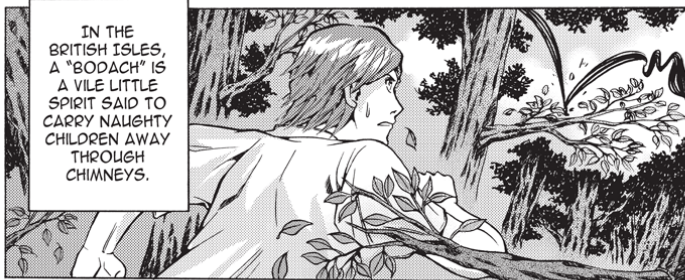
...MY GUY...



...HE'S KIND OF ODD.



I
LOOKED
THE
WORD
UP.



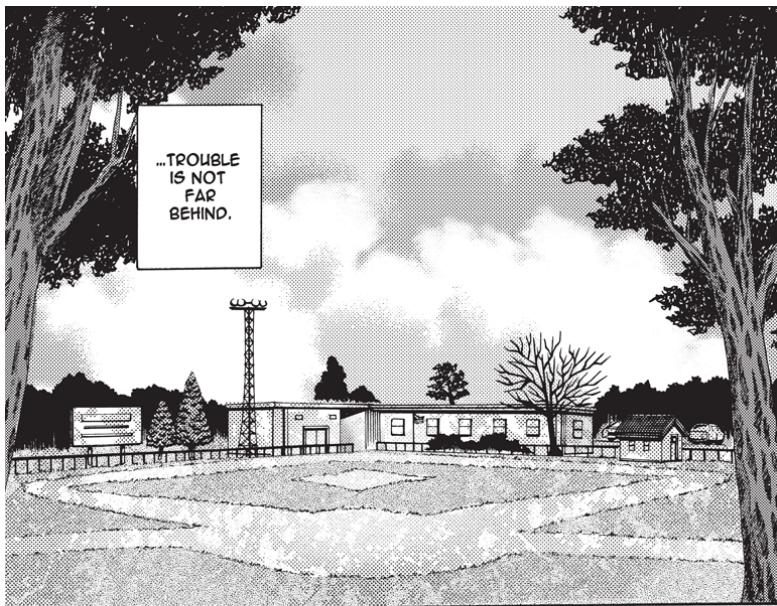
IN THE
BRITISH ISLES,
A "BODACH" IS
A VILE LITTLE
SPIRIT SAID TO
CARRY NAUGHTY
CHILDREN AWAY
THROUGH
CHIMNEYS.



I DON'T
SEE THEM
ALL THAT
OFTEN.

BUT THEY'RE
ATTRACTED
TO EVIL LIKE
MOTHS
TO FLAME.

WHERE
THEY
GATHER...



...TROUBLE
IS NOT
FAR
BEHIND.

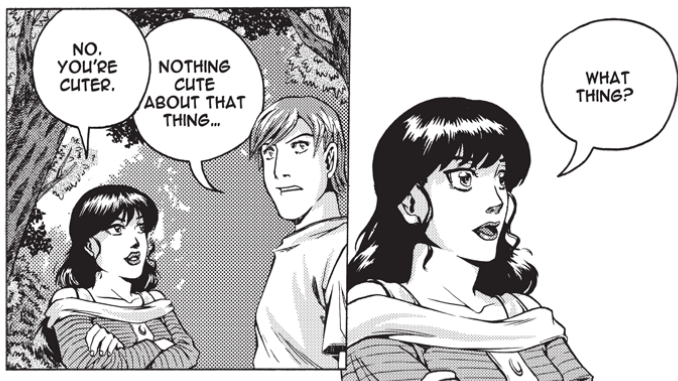
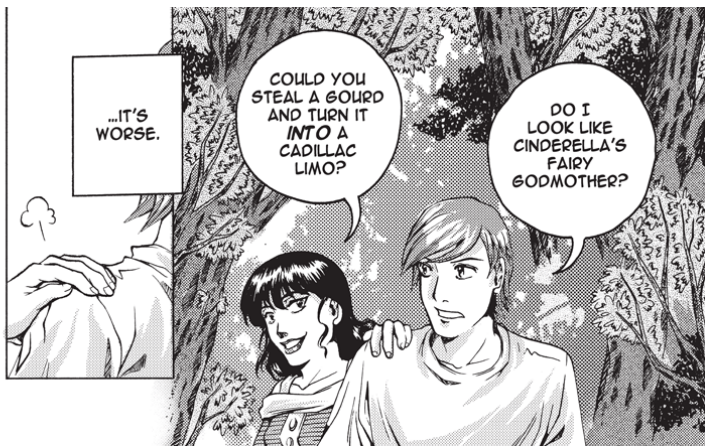


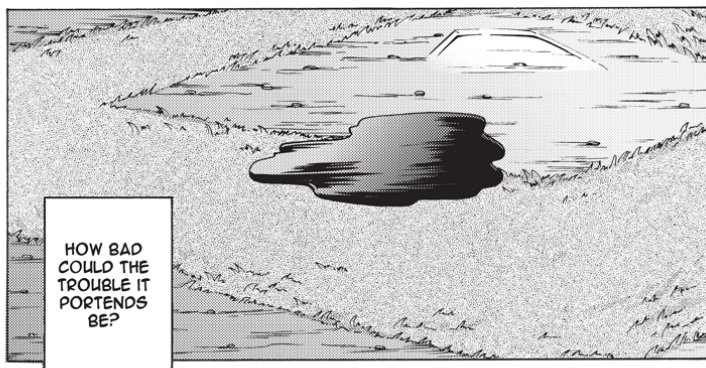
THE TROUBLE
IS NOT ALWAYS
AS BAD AS
RUNAWAY
TRUCKS
AGAINST
CONCRETE
WALLS.

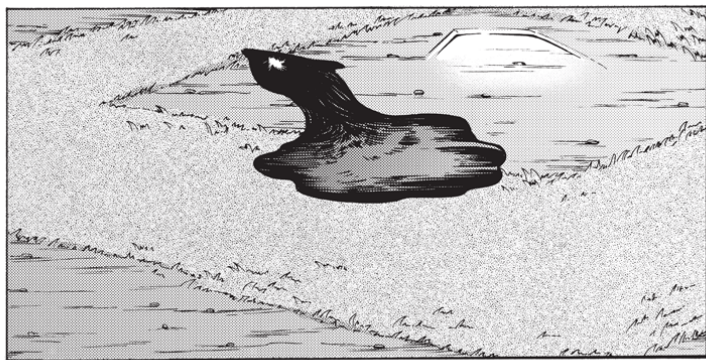
WHERE
...?

FREQUENTLY
...

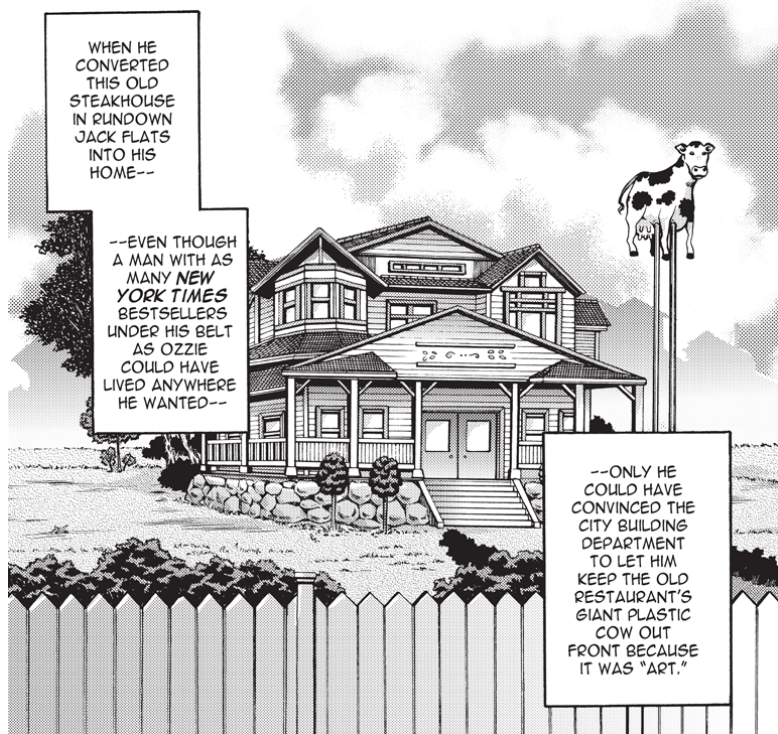
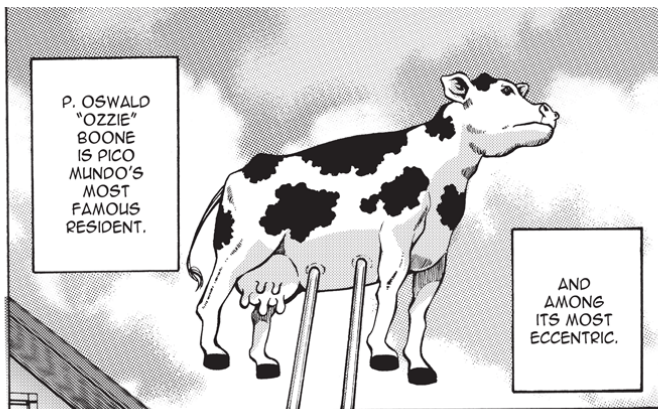


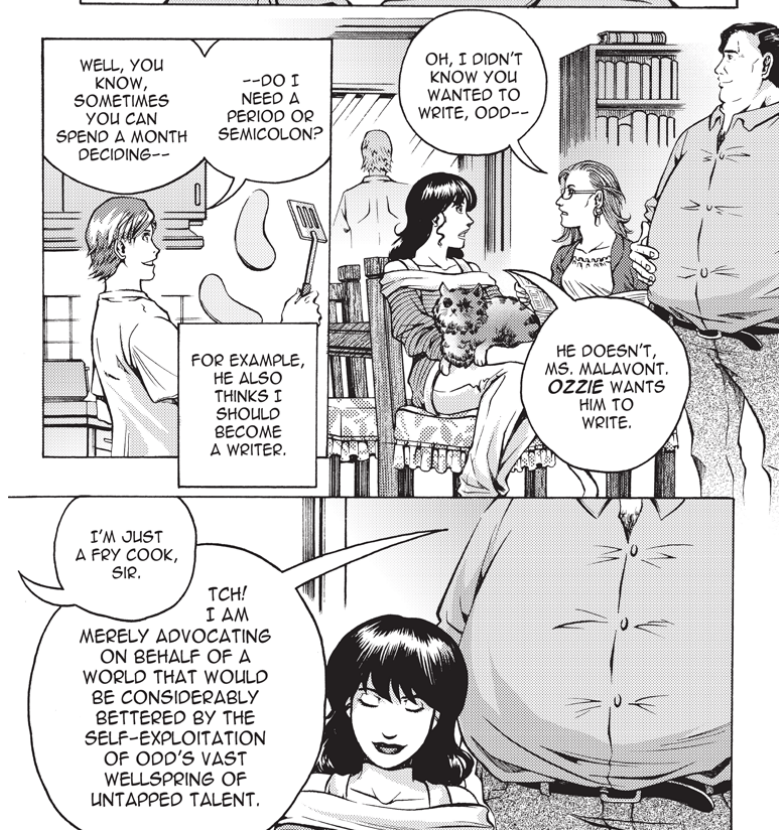


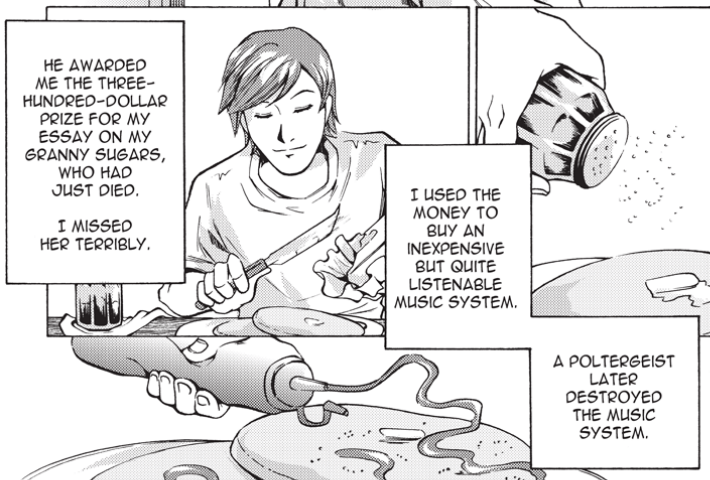
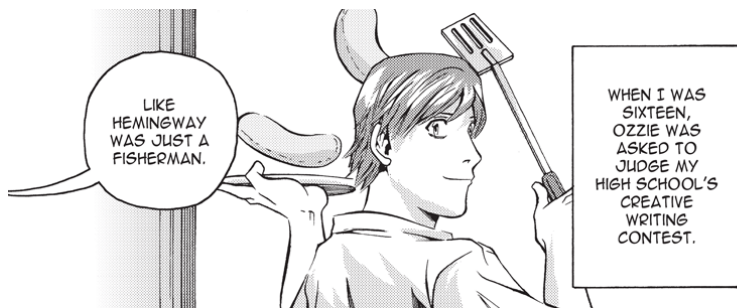


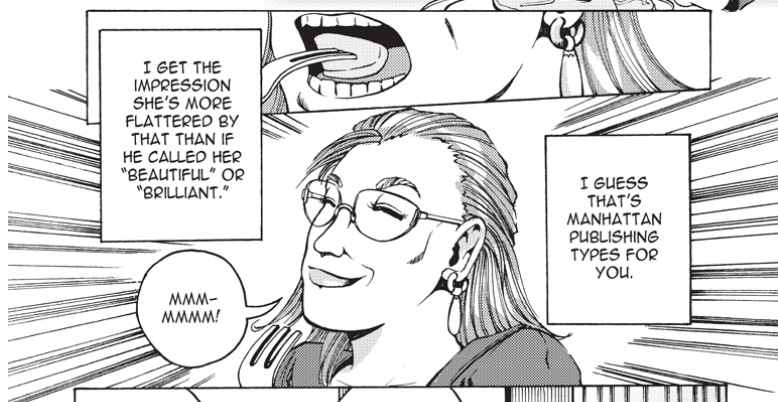
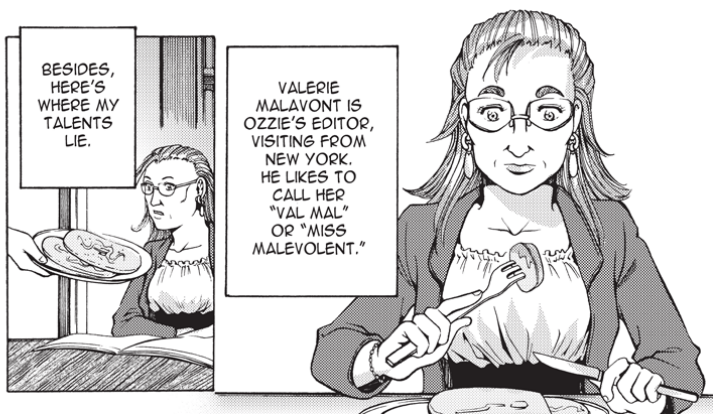


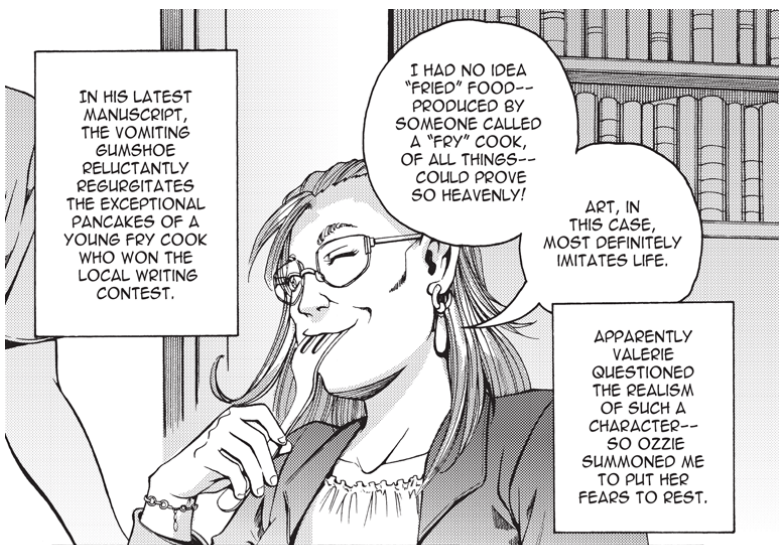












IN HIS LATEST
MANUSCRIPT,
THE VOMITING
GUMSHOE
RELUCTANTLY
RESURGITATES
THE EXCEPTIONAL
PANCAKES OF A
YOUNG FRY COOK
WHO WON THE
LOCAL WRITING
CONTEST.

I HAD NO IDEA
"FRIED" FOOD--
PRODUCED BY
SOMEONE CALLED
A "FRY" COOK,
OF ALL THINGS--
COULD PROVE
SO HEAVENLY!

ART, IN
THIS CASE,
MOST DEFINITELY
IMITATES LIFE.

APPARENTLY
VALERIE
QUESTIONED
THE REALISM
OF SUCH A
CHARACTER--
SO OZZIE
SUMMONED ME
TO PUT HER
FEARS TO REST.



I FEAR
NO
FOOD
CRITIC...

HSSSS!

CHESTER!
ODDIE
LOVES
YOU.



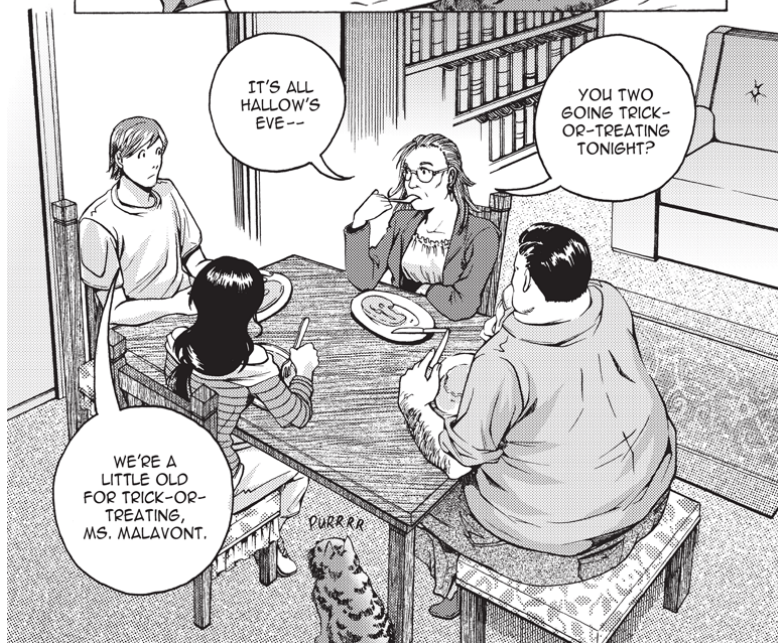
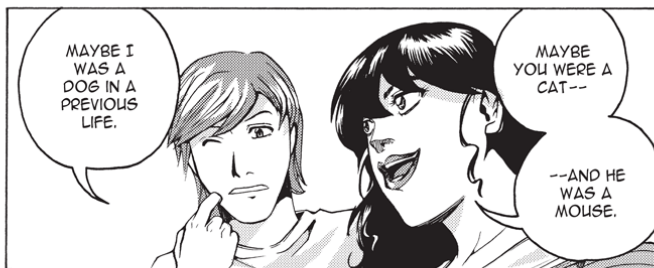
...BUT OZZIE'S
ENORMOUS,
ANCIENT CAT,
TERRIBLE
CHESTER,
IS ANOTHER
MATTER.

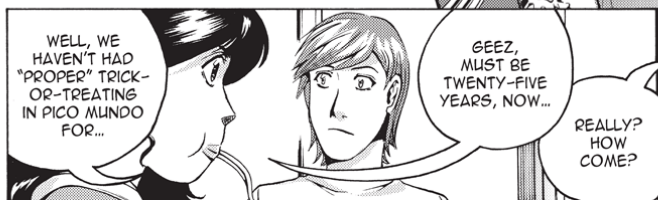
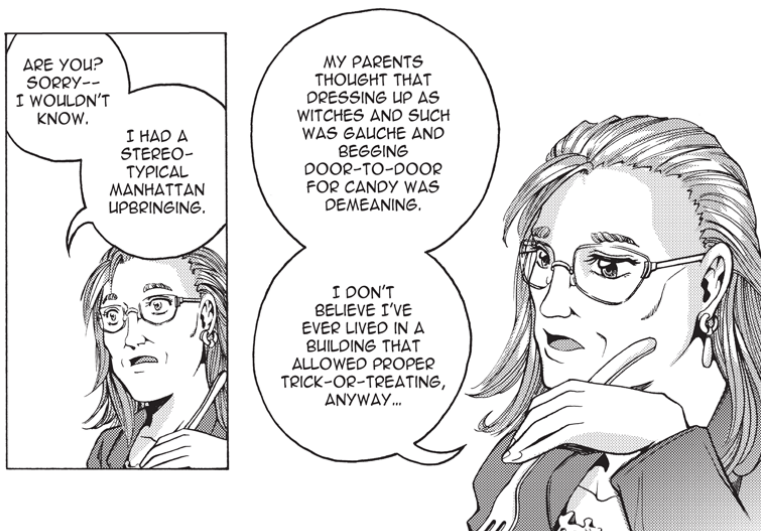


THE
BEAST
DESPISES
ME.
I DON'T
KNOW WHY.

PRETTY
KITTY.
RELAX...

...I'M JUST
A DELIVERY
SYSTEM FOR
FLAPJACKS.





"...AND HE WAS
SICK OF TRICK-
OR-TREATERS
TRAMPLING IT
EVERY YEAR AS
THEY SKIPPED
HIS HOUSE
TO GET TO
THE NEXT...

"...SINCE HE
WAS TOO
CHEAP TO
HAND OUT
CANDY.



"AND THE YEAR
HE DARED YELL
AT THE KIDS,
SOME OF
THE LITTLE
MISCREANTS
SOAPED THE
WINDOWS OF
HIS BELOVED
GREENHOUSE...

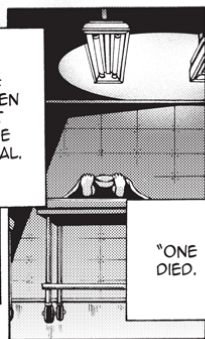


"HE HAD
ENOUGH.
NORMAN
TURLEY
TURNED INTO
NORMAN
BATES.

"NEXT
HALLOWEEN,
KIDS ALL
ACROSS TOWN
BECAME
DEATHLY ILL
AFTER
CONSUMING
THEIR BOOTY.



"FIVE
CHILDREN
WENT
TO THE
HOSPITAL.



"ONE
DIED.

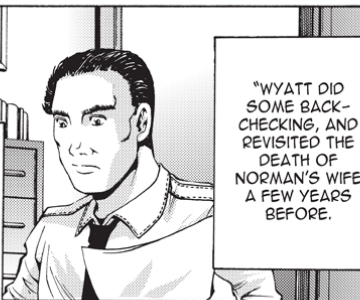


"PICO MUNDO WAS NEARLY TORN APART WITH SUSPICIONS OF WHO HANDED OUT THE POISON CANDY.

"NEIGHBORS ACCUSED NEIGHBORS, AND NONE CRIED LOUDER THAN THE PARENTS OF THE WORST-STRIKEN.

"UNTIL A YOUNG SHERIFF'S DEPUTY NAMED WYATT PORTER, WHO WAS NOT SO FAR FROM TRICK-OR-TREATING AGE HIMSELF...

"...REALIZED THIS WAS THE FIRST YEAR NORMAN TURLEY HAD ACTUALLY HANDED OUT CANDY.

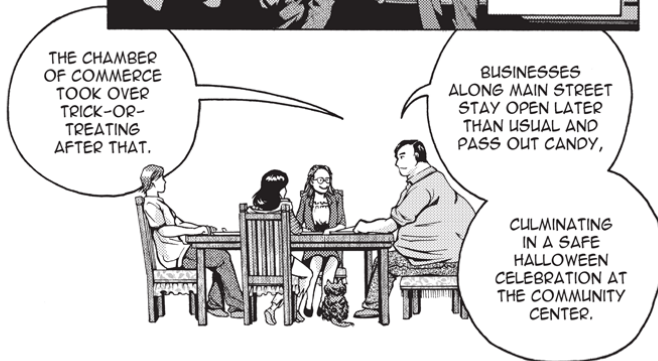


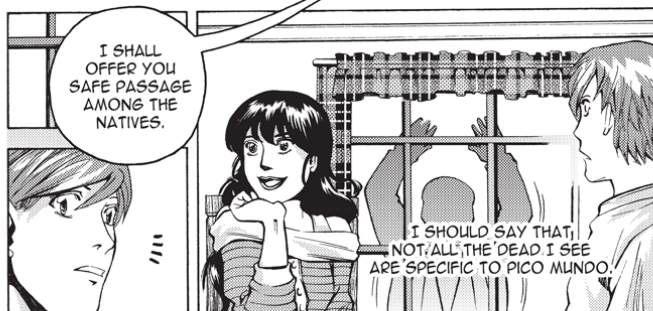
"WYATT DID SOME BACK-CHECKING, AND REVISITED THE DEATH OF NORMAN'S WIFE A FEW YEARS BEFORE.

"DOCTORS BELIEVED SHE HAD SUFFERED ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK FROM AN UNSPECIFIED ALLERGIC REACTION.



"BUT HER SYMPTOMS-- NAUSEA, FEVER, GIDDINESS, DELIRIUM, WEAKNESS, DEPRESSED BREATHING, SHARP PAINS IN THE SPINE, ET CETERA-- WERE THE SAME AS THE POISONED CHILDREN'S.







STILL, FOR
SOME REASON,
THE KING OF
ROCK AND ROLL
VISITS ME WITH
WHAT SOME
MIGHT CALL
ALARMING
FREQUENCY.



THE DEAD
DON'T
SPEAK.
I DON'T
KNOW WHY.

BUT THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN THEY
DON'T HAVE
ANYTHING
TO SAY.

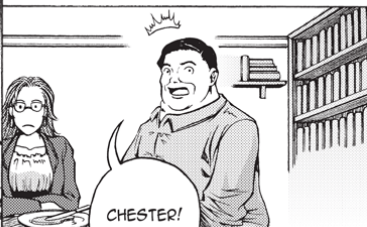
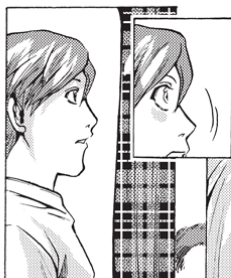
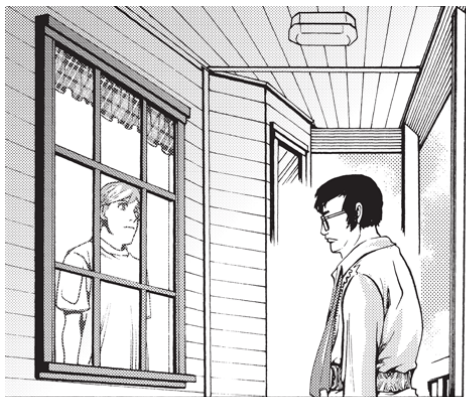


AND HE'S
DEFINITELY
TRYING
TO TELL ME
SOMETHING.



?

WHAT, I
COULDN'T
TELL YOU.



THAT'S NO
WAY TO
TREAT
COMPANY!



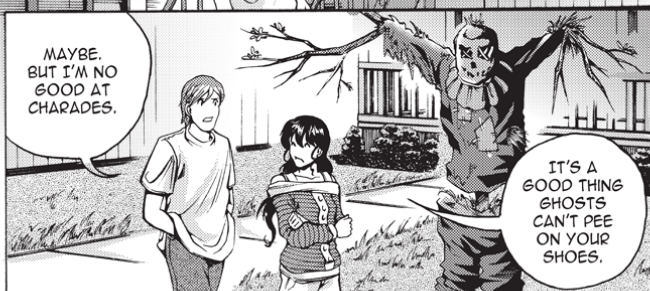
ELVIS ISN'T
THE ONLY ONE
DISAPPOINTED
WITH ME.



I HAD TO
GO BACK
HOME FOR
A CHANGE
OF SHOES.

I DIDN'T SEE
THE POINT
OF KEEPING
MY UNEASE
FROM STORMY
ANY LONGER.

SO YOU THINK
ELVIS WAS TRYING
TO WARN YOU
THAT SOMETHING
AWFUL IS ABOUT
TO HAPPEN?



MAYBE.
BUT I'M NO
GOOD AT
CHARADES.

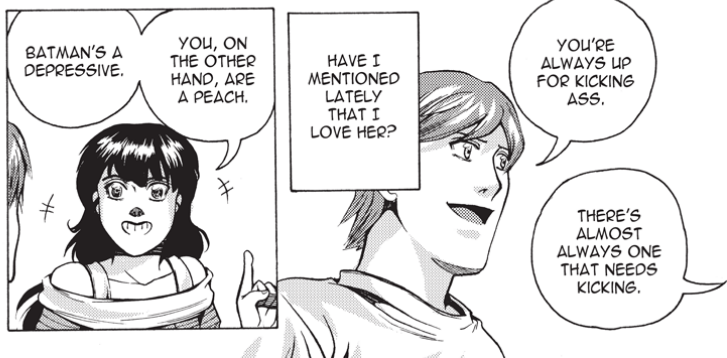
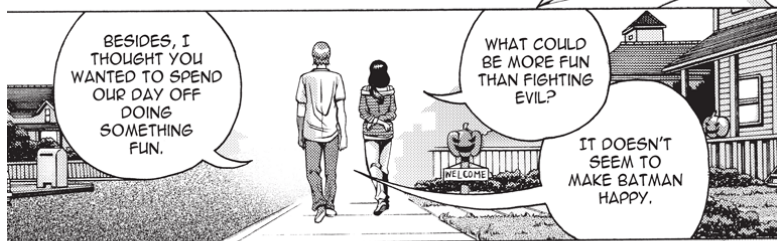
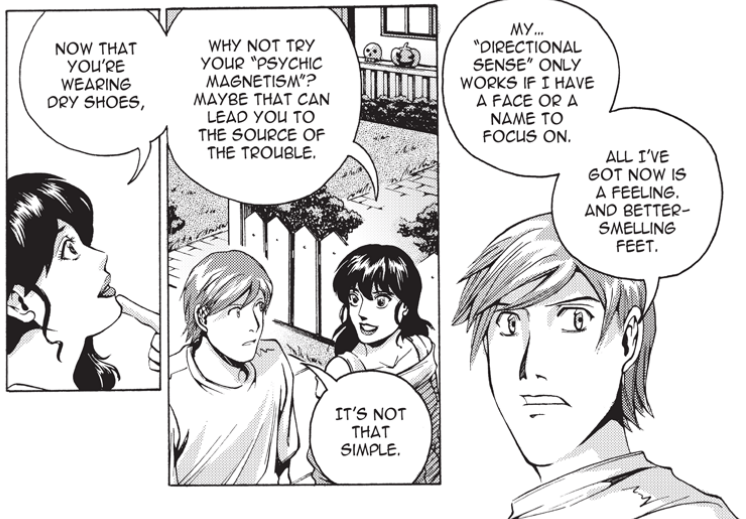
IT'S A
GOOD THING
GHOSTS
CAN'T PEE
ON YOUR
SHOES.

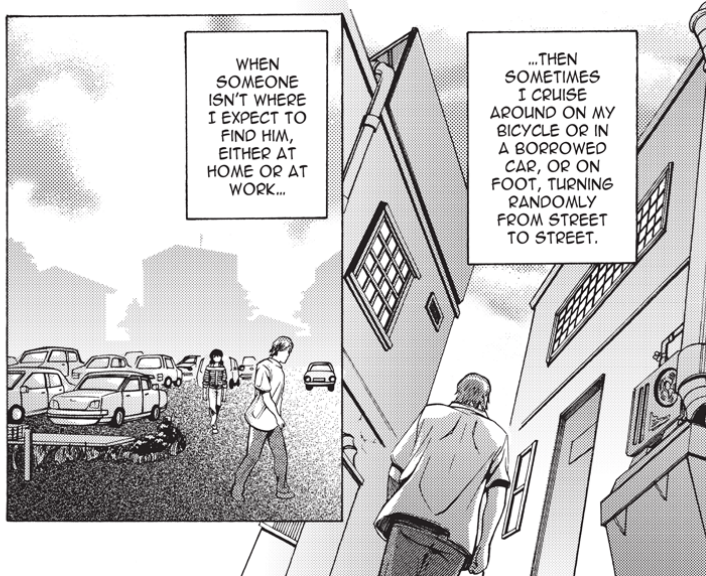
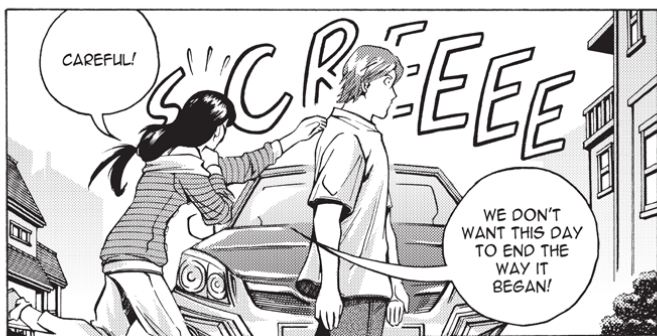


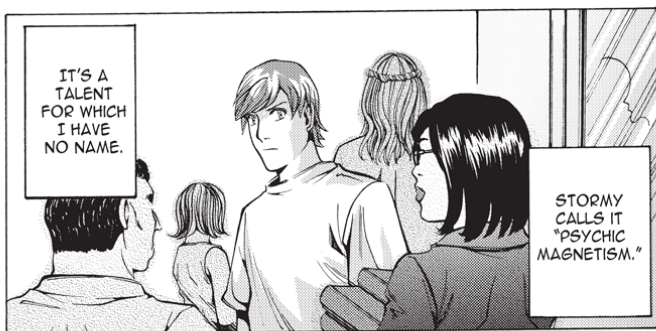
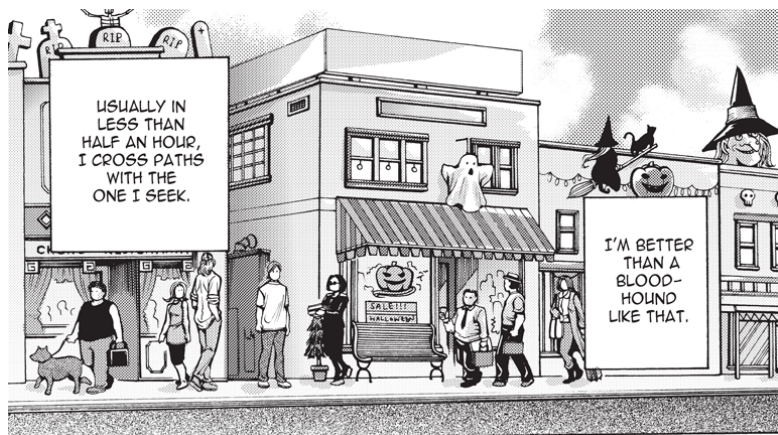
THIS IS THE ONE
TIME OF YEAR
EVERYBODY
ACKNOWLEDGES
SUPERNATURAL
WEIRDNESS.

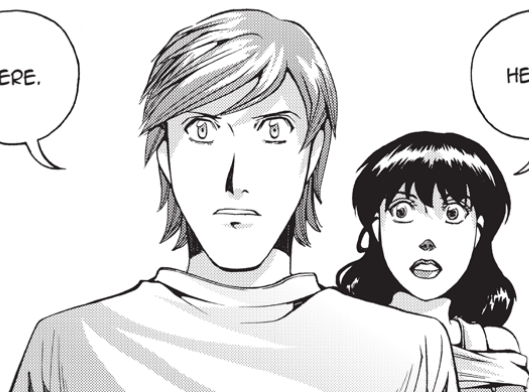
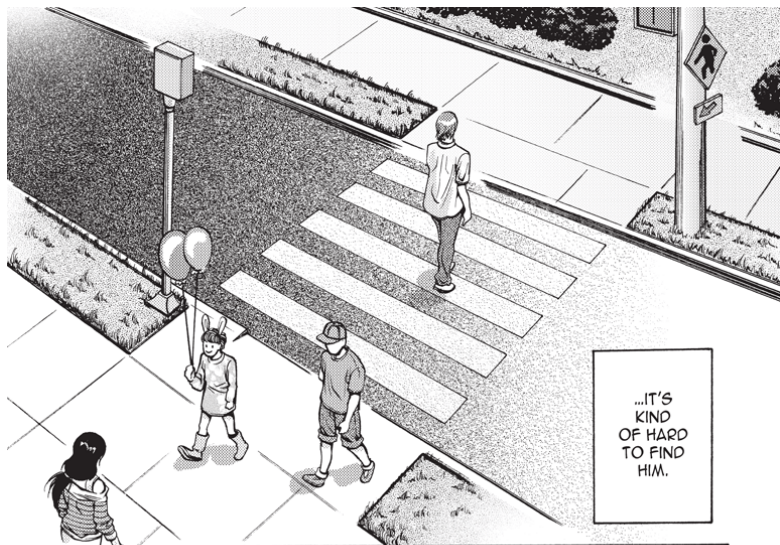
BUT I
LIVE WITH
IT EVERY
DAY.

I WONDER IF
HALLOWEEN IS
CAUSING
"PSYCHIC STATIC"
IN MY HEAD OR
SOMETHING.





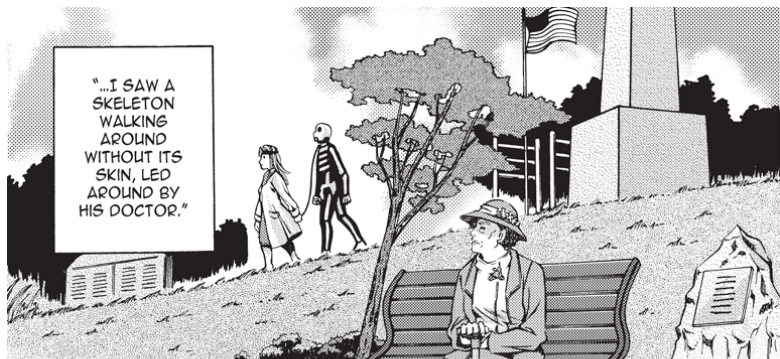






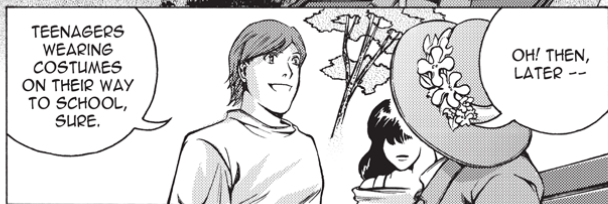


"...I SAW A SKELETON WALKING AROUND WITHOUT ITS SKIN, LED AROUND BY HIS DOCTOR."

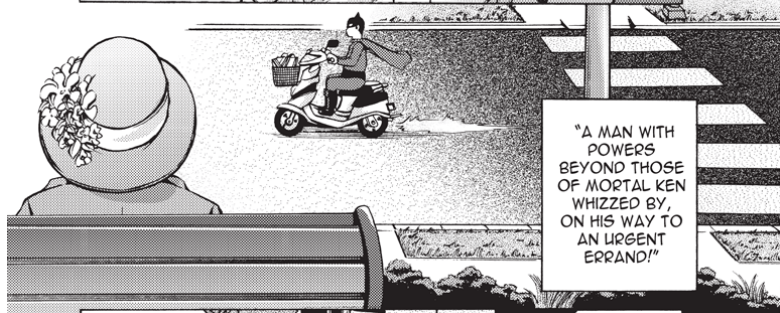


TEENAGERS WEARING COSTUMES ON THEIR WAY TO SCHOOL, SURE.

OH! THEN, LATER --

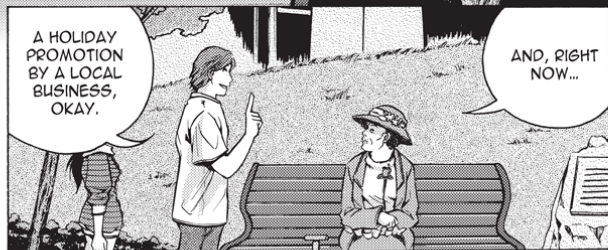


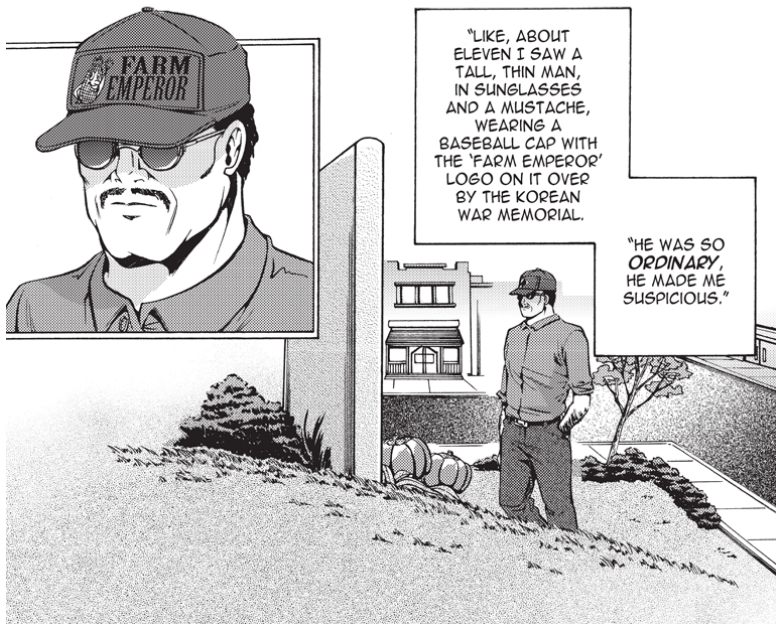
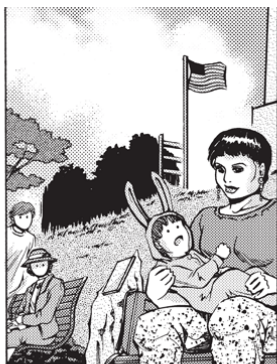
"A MAN WITH POWERS BEYOND THOSE OF MORTAL KEN WHIZZED BY, ON HIS WAY TO AN URGENT ERRAND!"

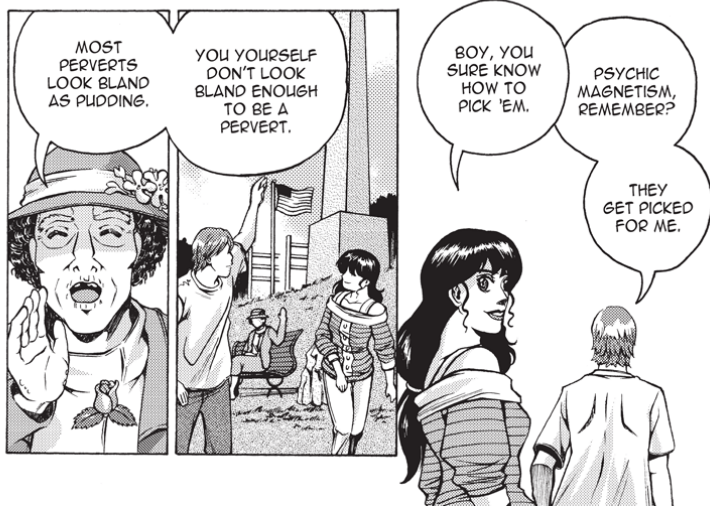
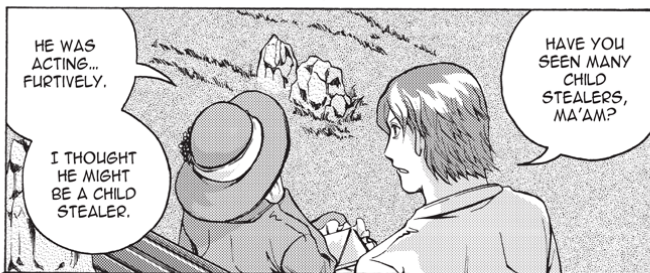


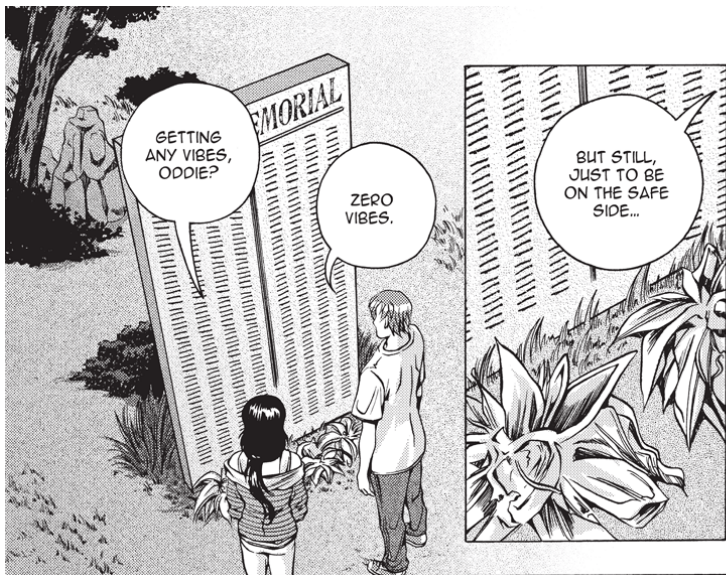
A HOLIDAY PROMOTION BY A LOCAL BUSINESS, OKAY.

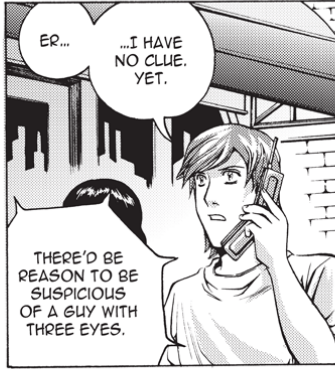
AND, RIGHT NOW...

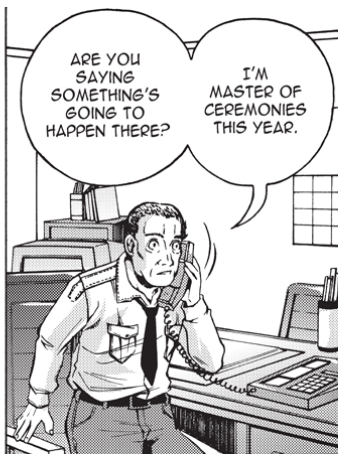


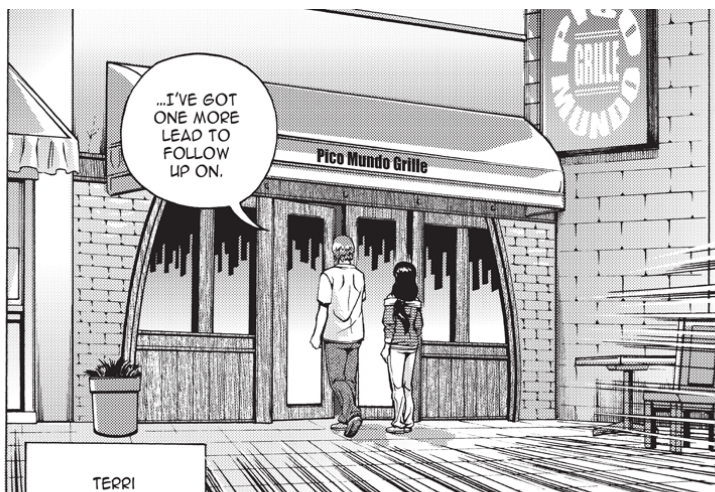












TERRI
STAMBAUGH
ISN'T JUST THE
OWNER AND
PROPRIETOR OF
THE BEST DINER
IN SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA--
MY BOSS--

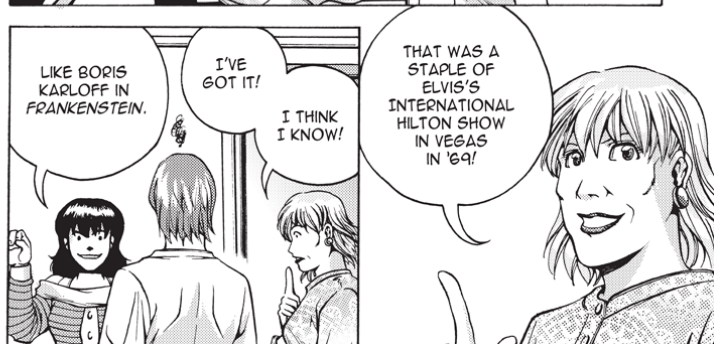


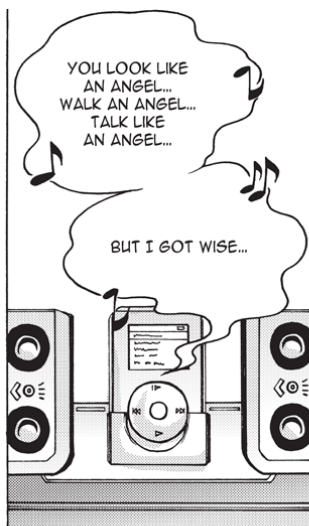
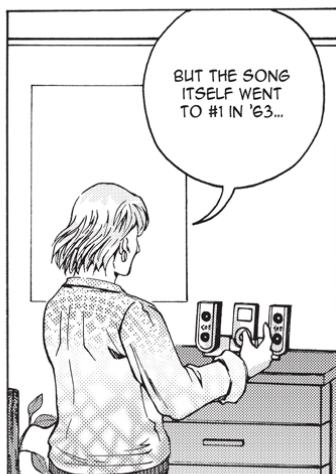
AND THEN...
HE KIND OF DID
THIS THING
WITH HIS
ARMS...

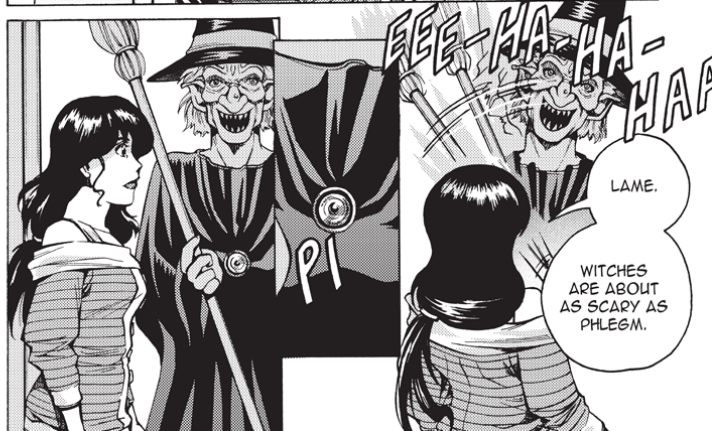
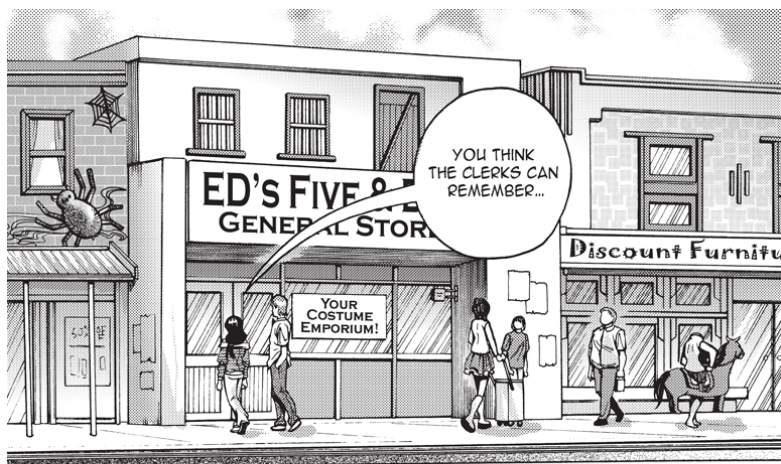


AND HIS HIPS...
THEY WERE KIND
OF MOVING
LIKE SO...

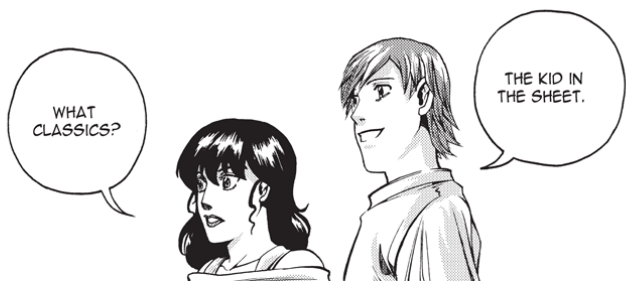
SNORT!

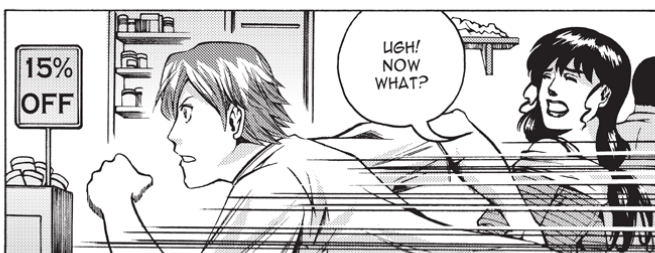


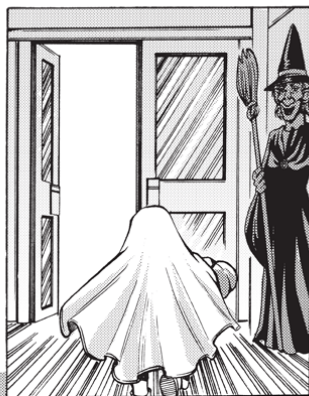
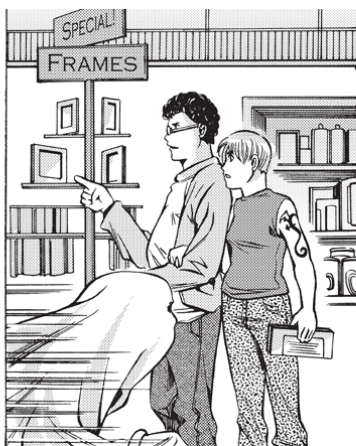










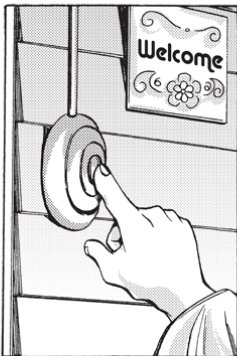
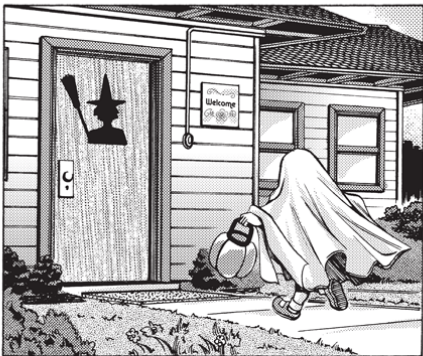
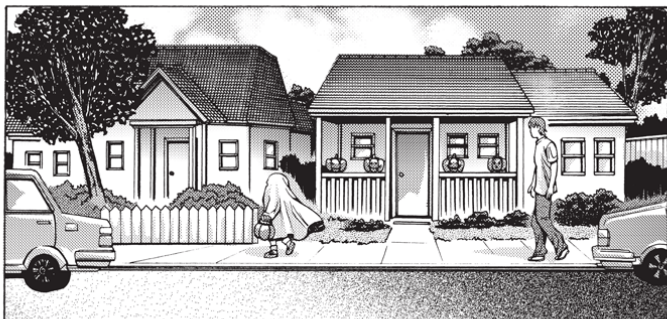


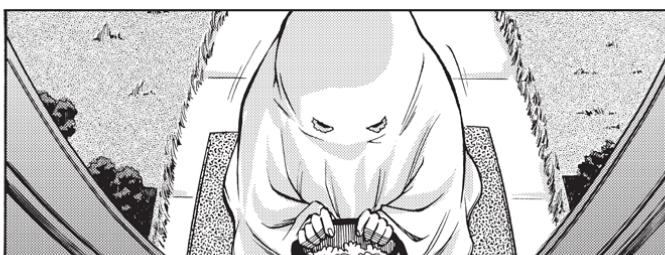
DIDN'T SET
OFF THE
WITCH'S MOTION
SENSOR...

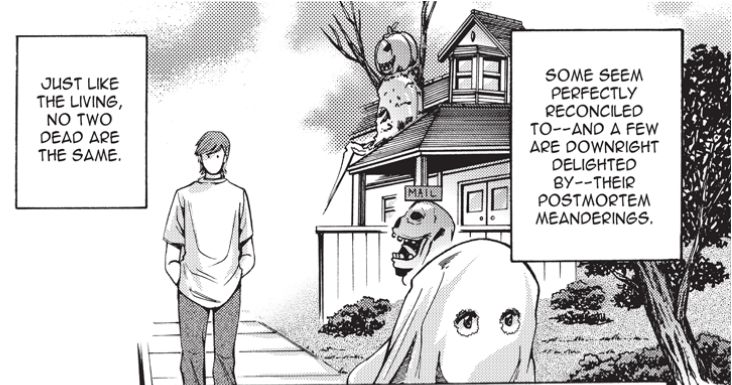
HALLOWEEN
SALE OFF 30%

TRUCKS
\$2.00EA



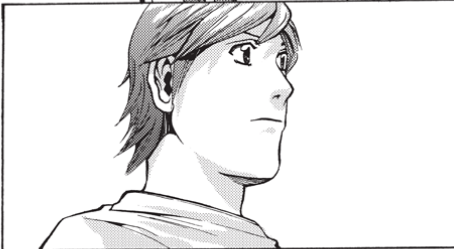






JUST LIKE
THE LIVING,
NO TWO
DEAD ARE
THE SAME.

SOME SEEM
PERFECTLY
RECONCILED
TO--AND A FEW
ARE DOWNRIGHT
DELIGHTED
BY--THEIR
POSTMORTEM
MEANDERINGS.



OTHERS
APPEAR MORE
TORMENTED
AT REMAINING
ON THIS EARTH
THAN ANY
TORTURE THAT
MIGHT BE WAITING
IN AN AFTERLIFE.



THOUGH
THE VAST
MAJORITY,
I FIND...

I GUESS
IT'S THE
"IF IT AIN'T
BROKE,
DON'T FIX IT"
PHILOSOPHY
OF HAUNTING.

...GO
THROUGH
THE MOTIONS
OF WHAT THEY
DID WHILE
THEY WERE
BREATHING.





I'M AFRAID
YOU'RE
WASTING
YOUR TIME.



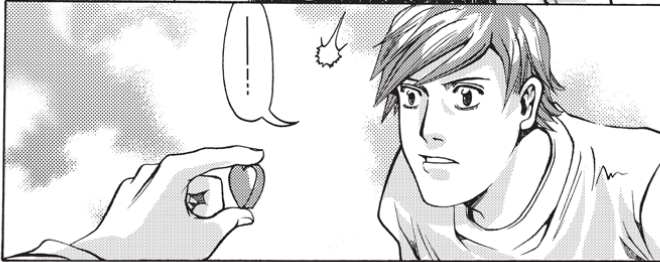
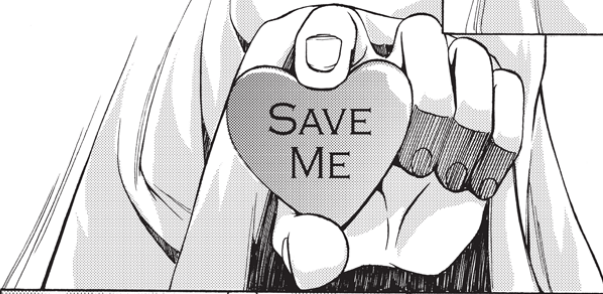
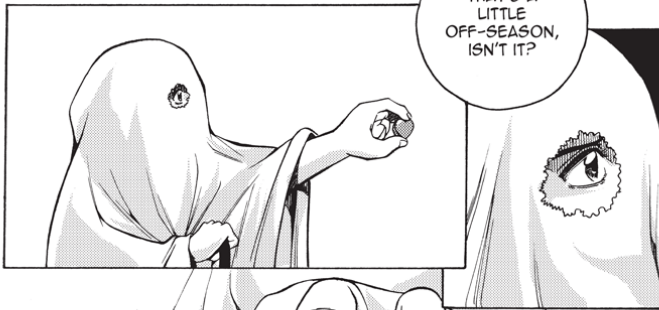
WE DON'T DO
DOOR-TO-DOOR
TRICK-OR-
TREATING
IN PICO MUNDO
ANYMORE.

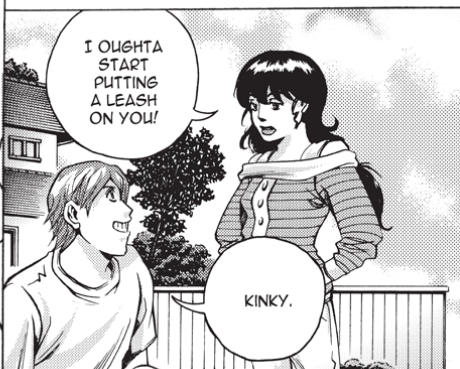
AND
EVEN IF
WE DID...



...I'M NOT SURE
YOUR ECTOPLASMIC
FINGERS ARE
MAKING MUCH OF
AN IMPRESSION
ON THOSE
DOORBELLS...







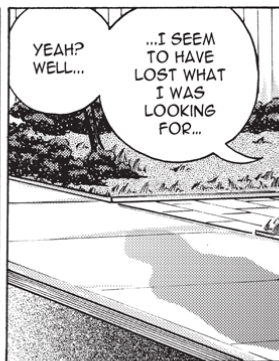
I OUGHTA
START
PUTTING
A LEASH
ON YOU!

KINKY.



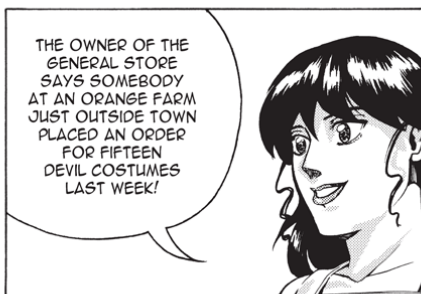
WHILE
YOU WERE
WANDERING
AIMLESSLY
AROUND
TOWN,

I SCORED
JUST WHAT
WE WERE
LOOKING
FOR!



YEAH?
WELL...

...I SEEM
TO HAVE
LOST WHAT
I WAS
LOOKING
FOR...

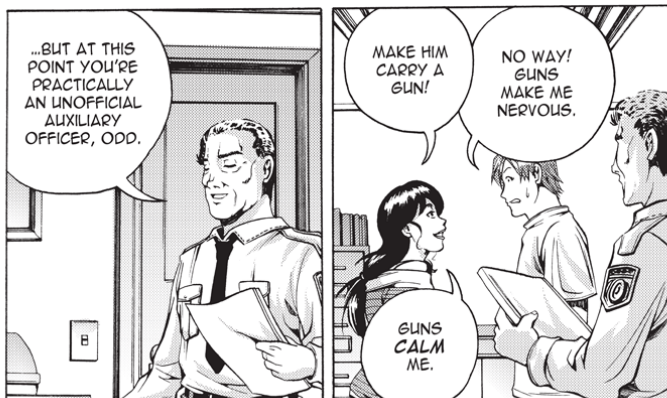


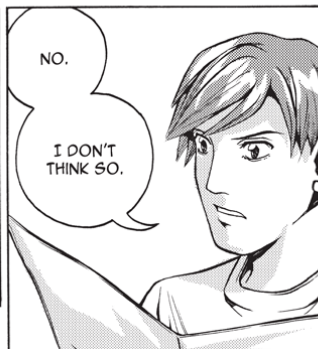
THE OWNER OF THE
GENERAL STORE
SAYS SOMEBODY
AT AN ORANGE FARM
JUST OUTSIDE TOWN
PLACED AN ORDER
FOR FIFTEEN
DEVIL COSTUMES
LAST WEEK!

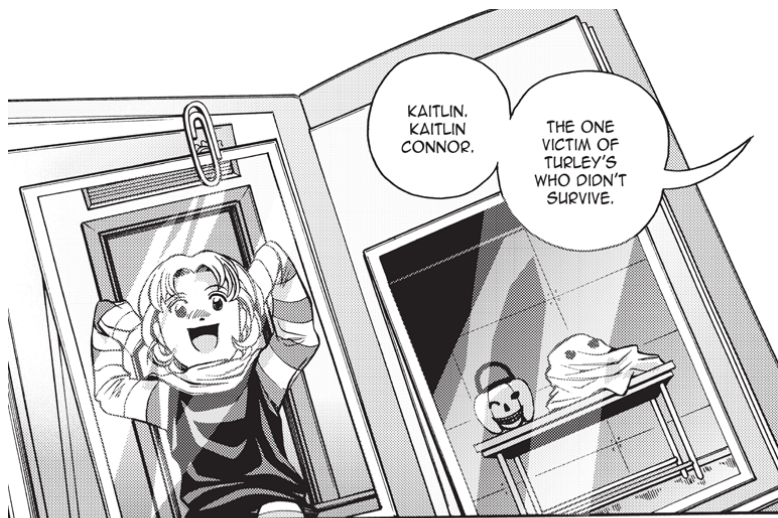


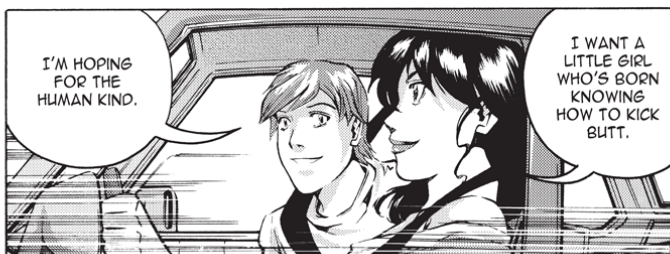
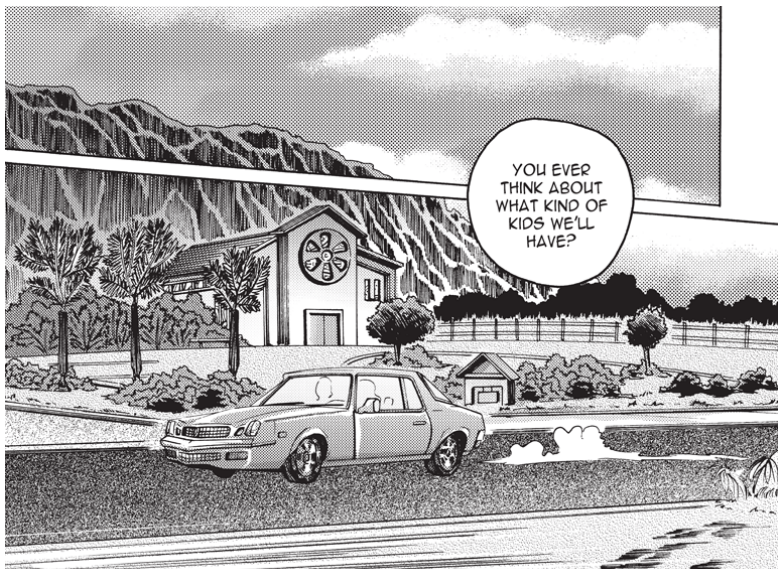
WE SHOULD
CHECK IT
OUT, HUH?

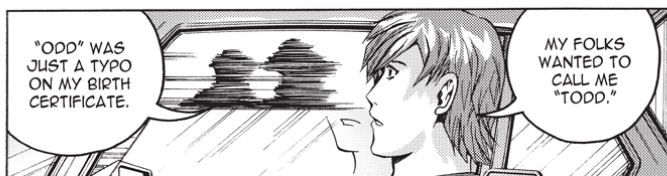
SURE
...

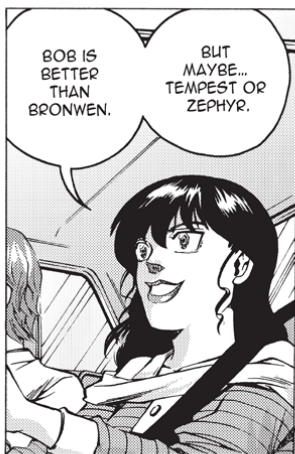
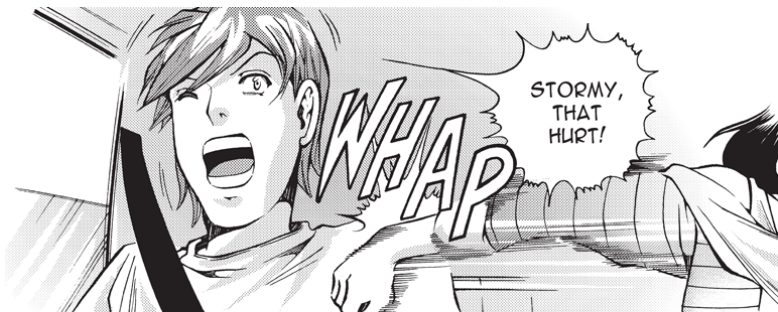




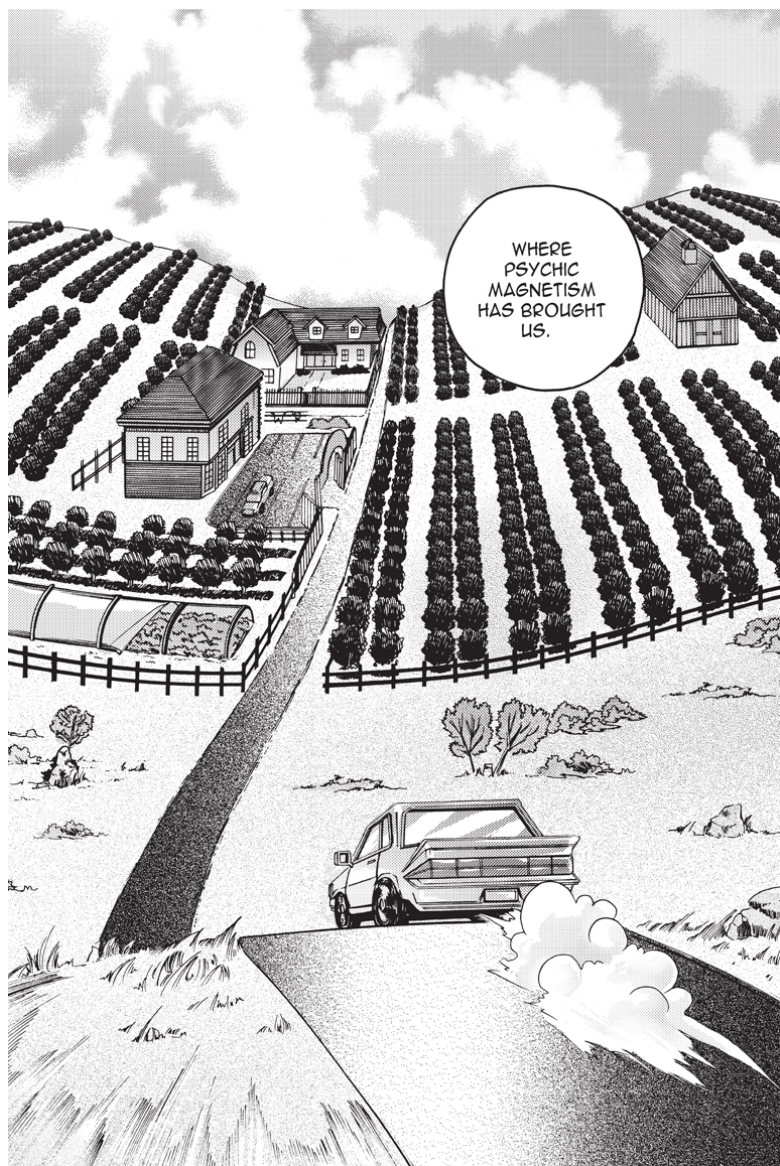


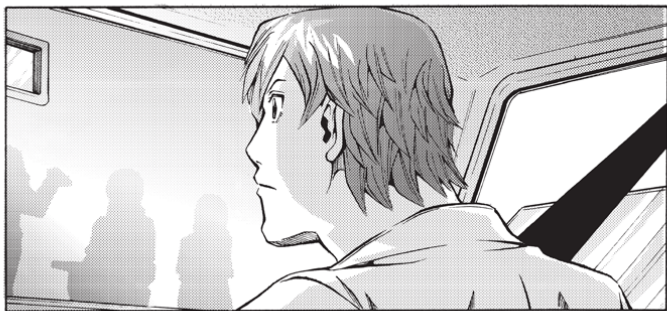
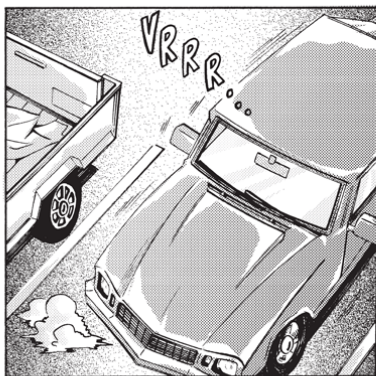
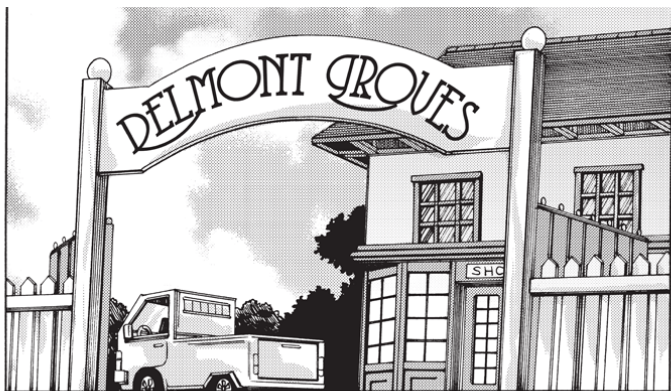


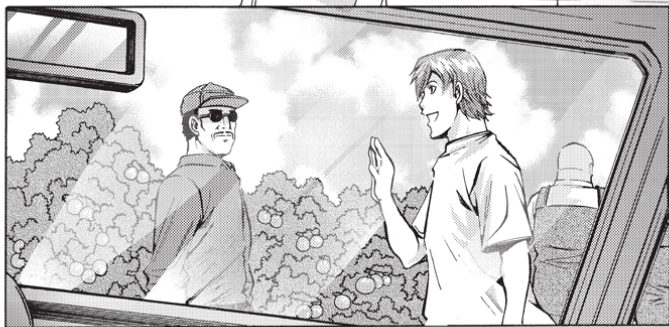




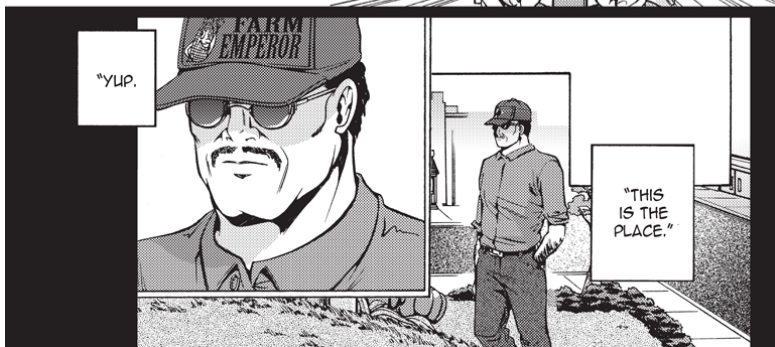
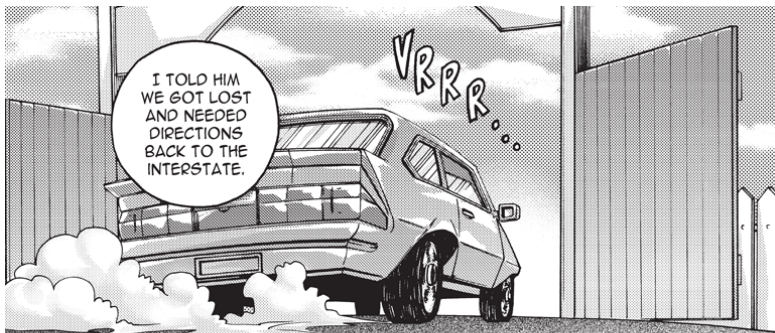


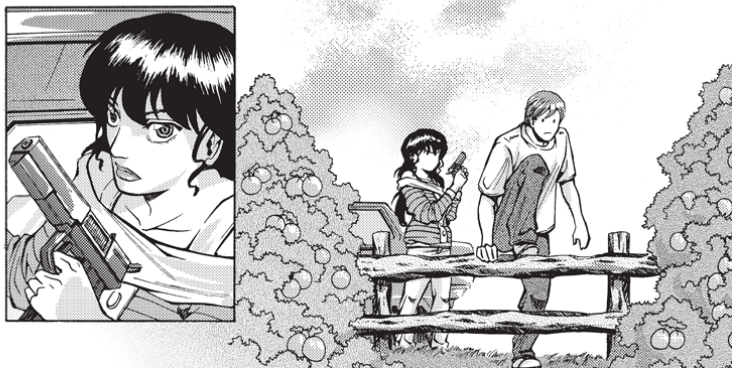
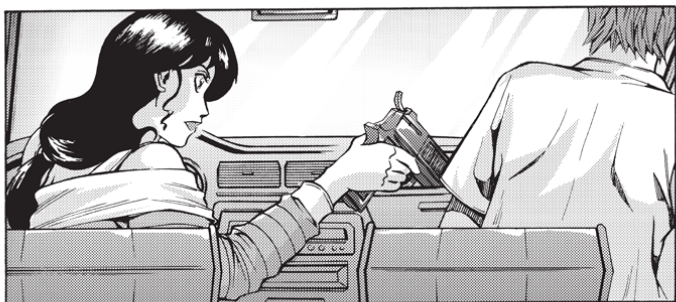
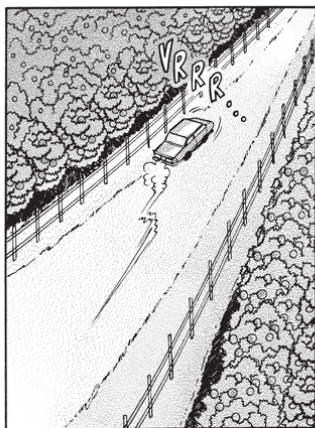


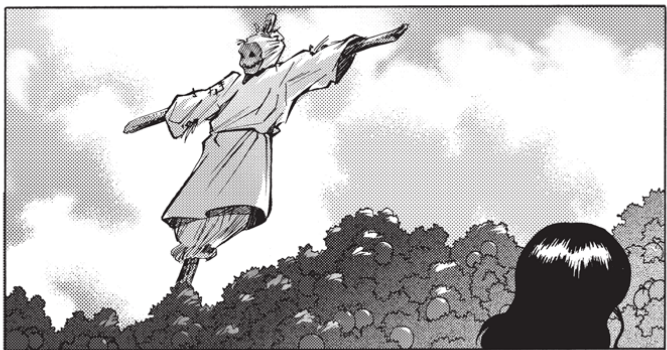
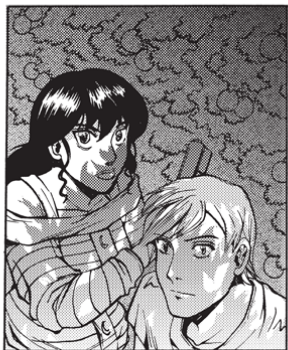
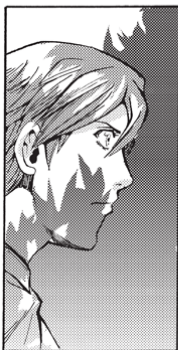
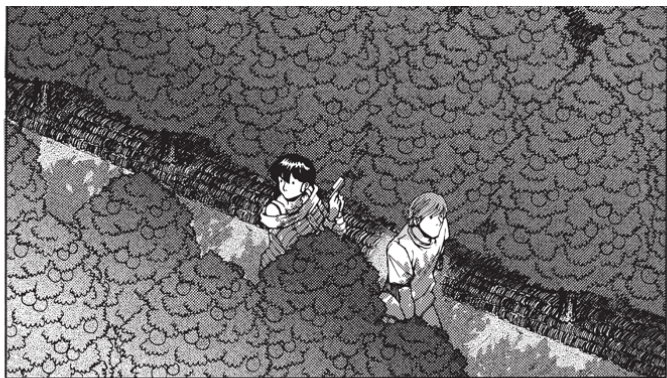


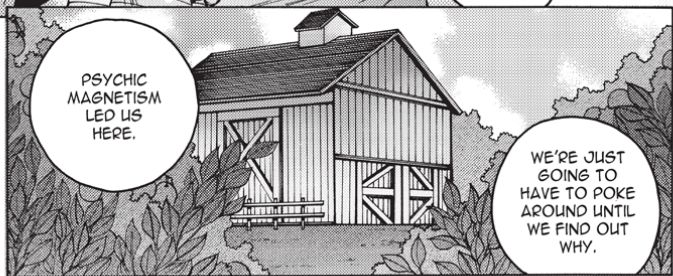
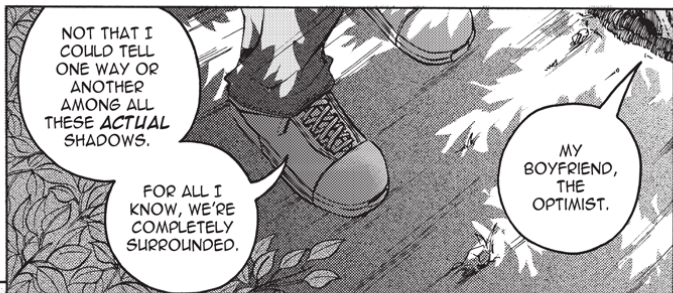
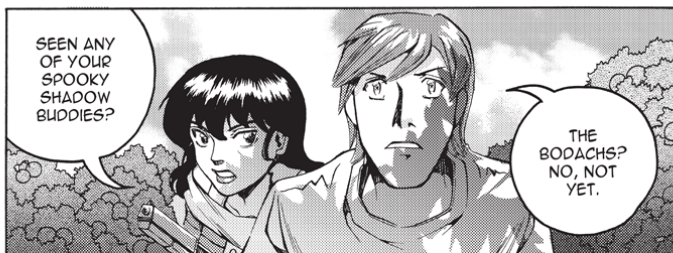


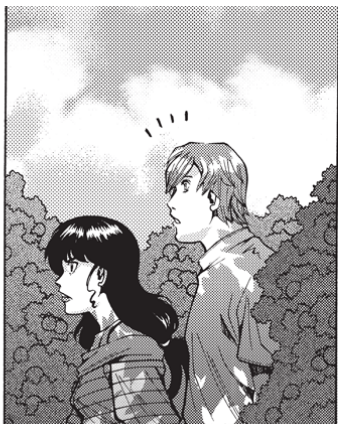


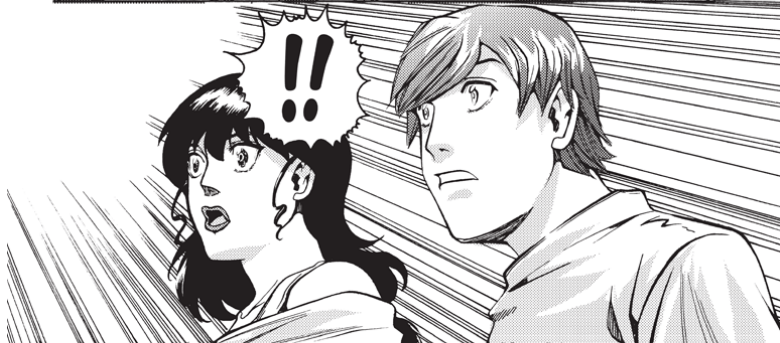






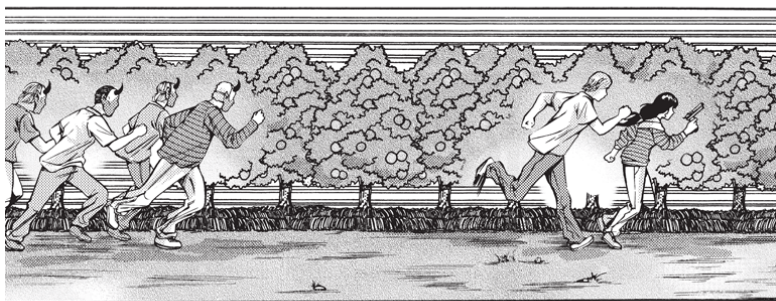


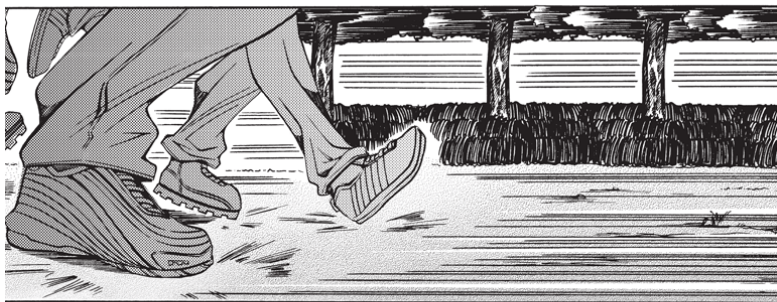


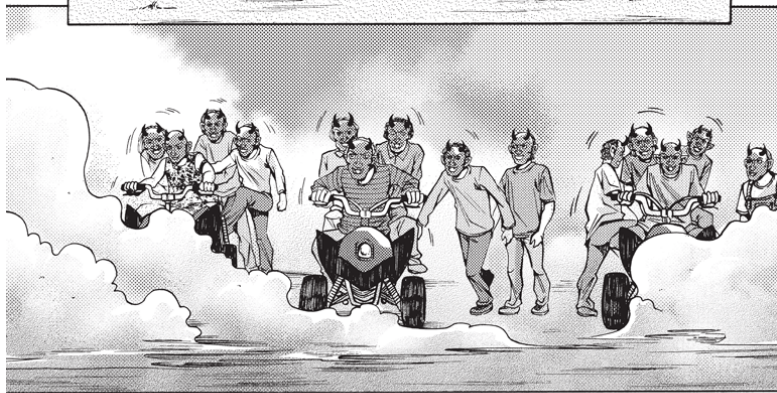
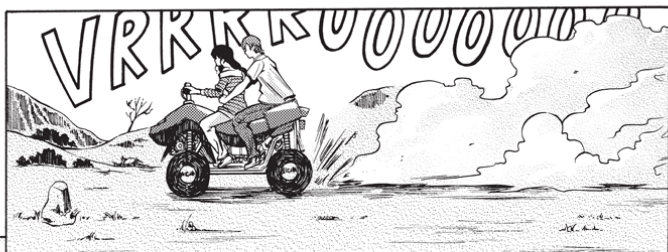
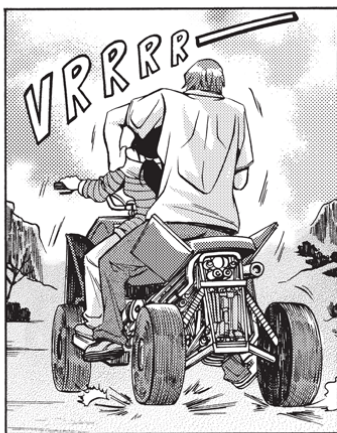


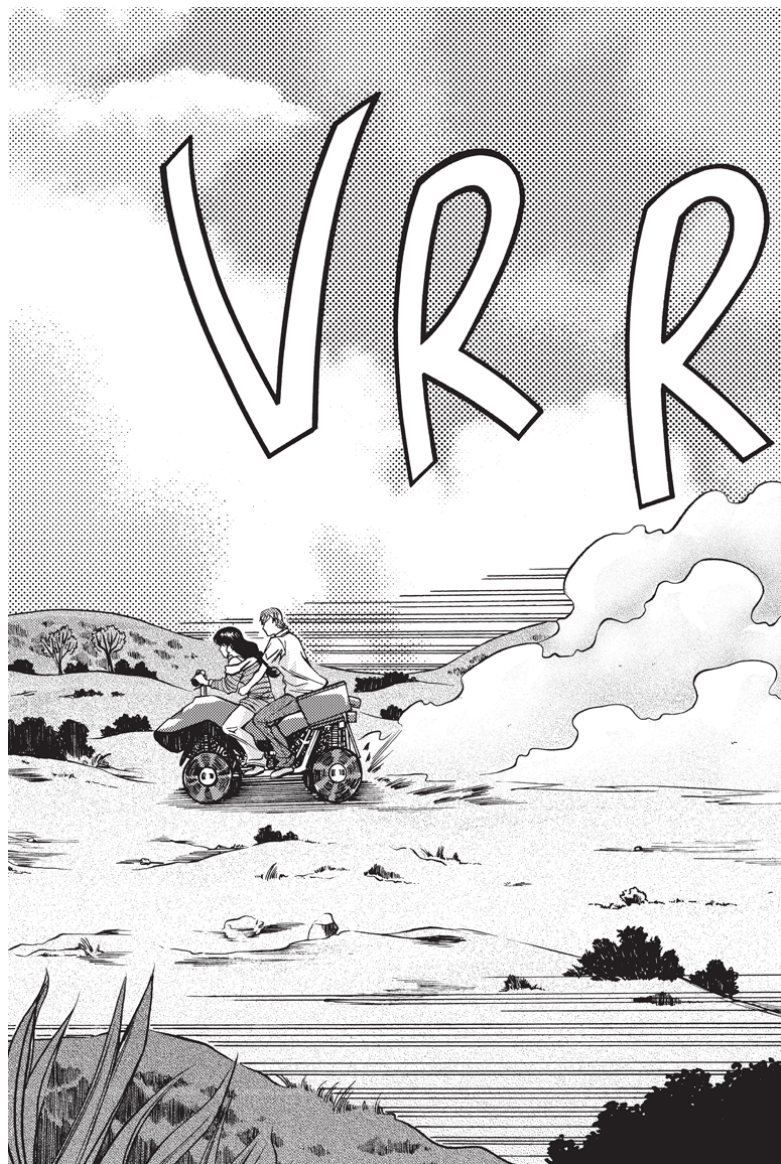


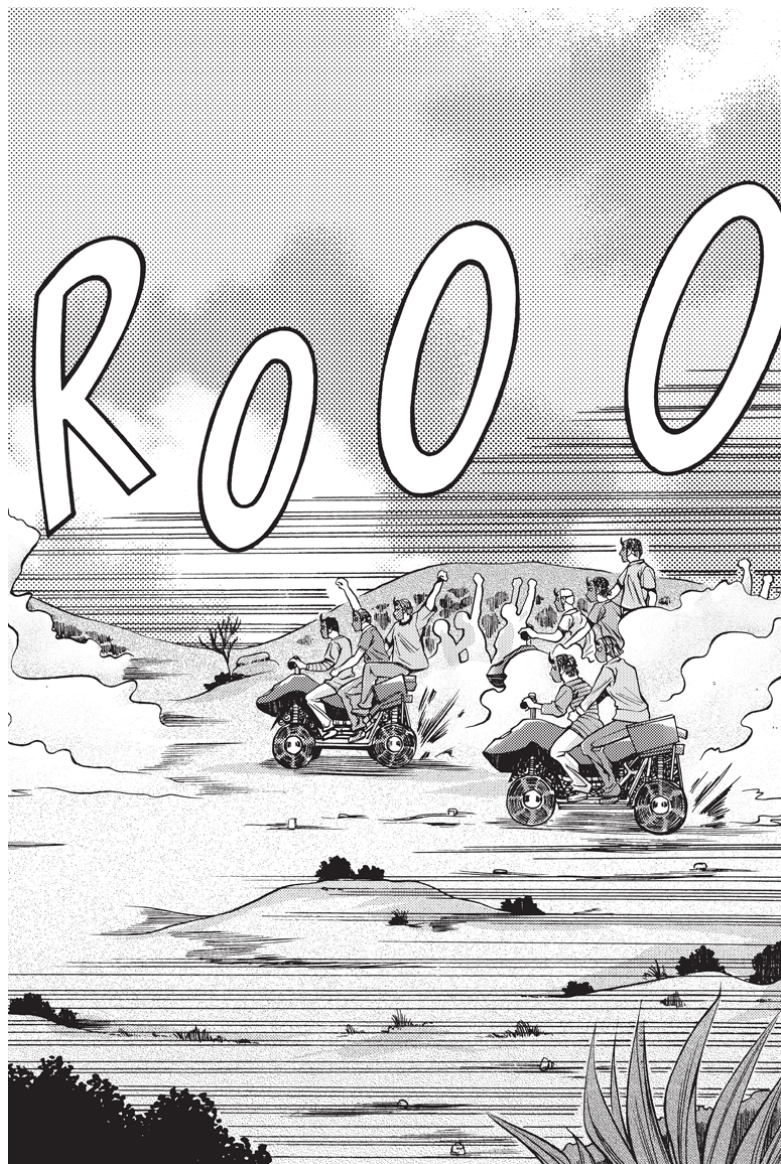


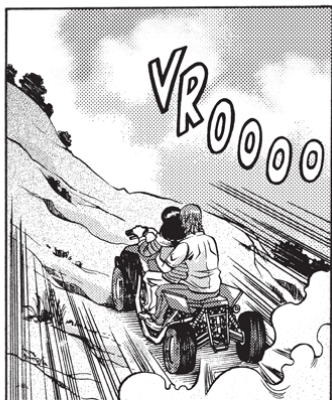












TAKE MY
GUN AND
SHOOT
THEM!

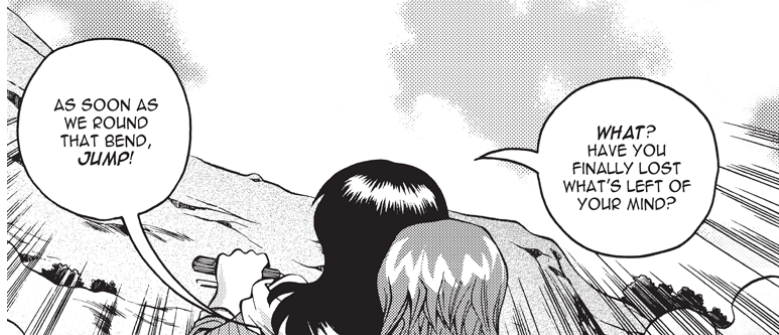
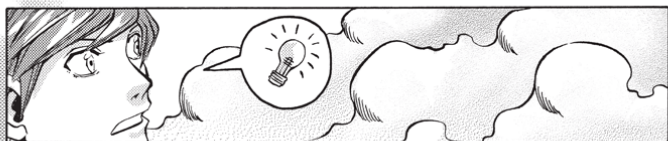
NO WAY!
I HATE
THOSE
THINGS!

REMIND ME
WHY I
DATE YOU
AGAIN?!



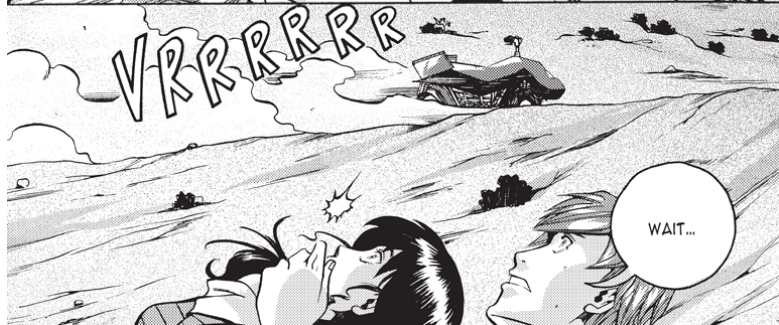
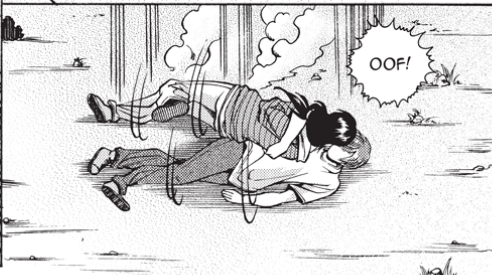
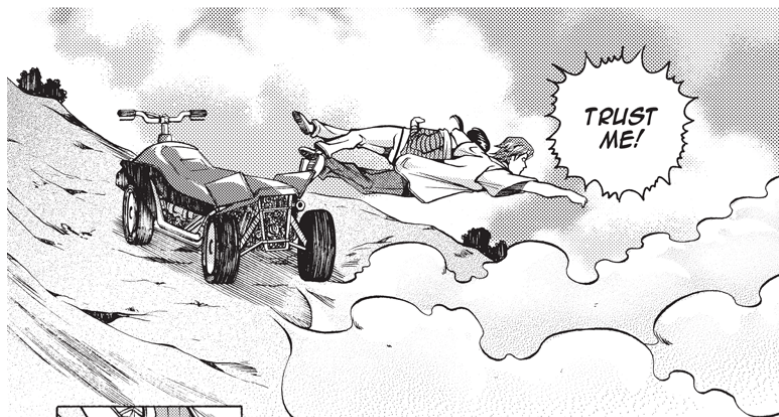
I'D GUESS
THE
SNUDDLING.
AND THE
FLAPJACKS.

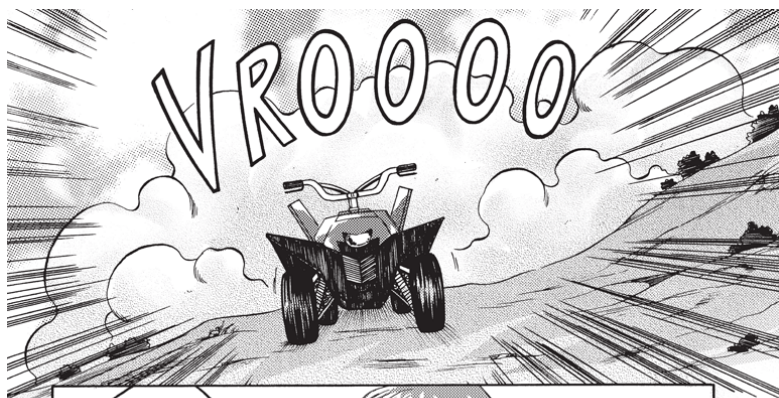
AT THE
MOMENT?
JUST THE
FLAPJACKS.



AS SOON AS
WE ROUND
THAT BEND,
JUMP!

WHAT?
HAVE YOU
FINALLY LOST
WHAT'S LEFT OF
YOUR MIND?



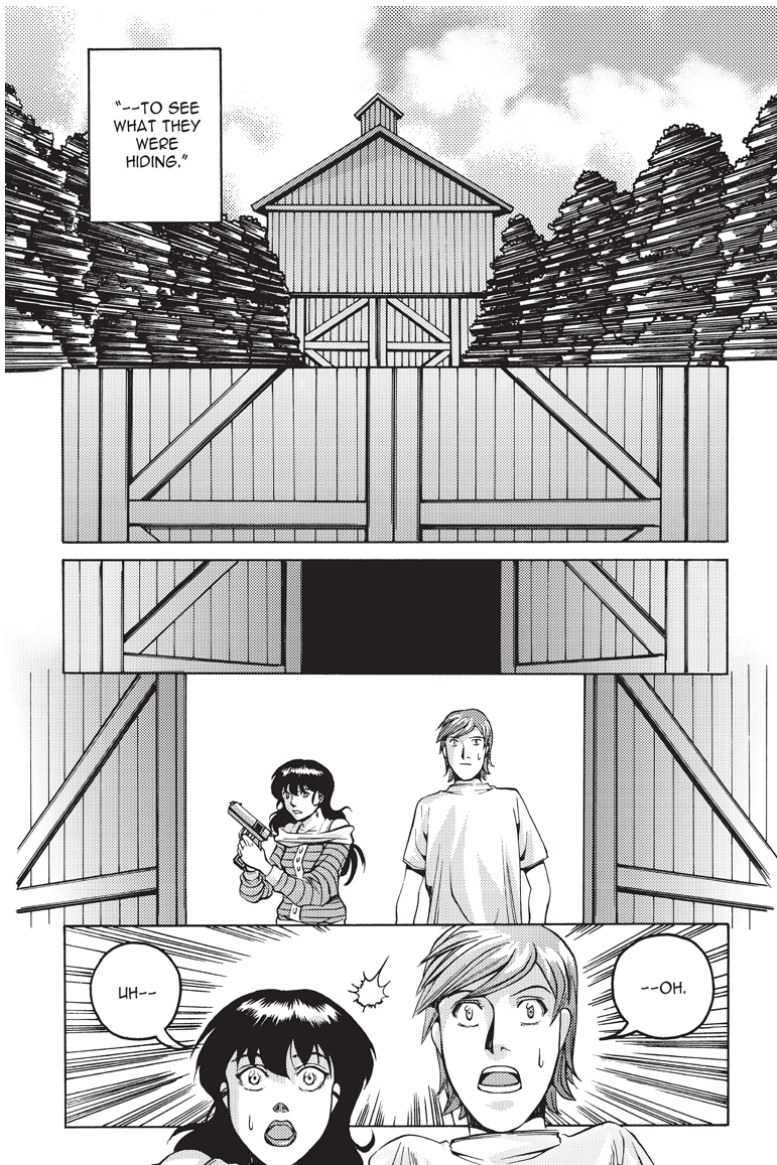


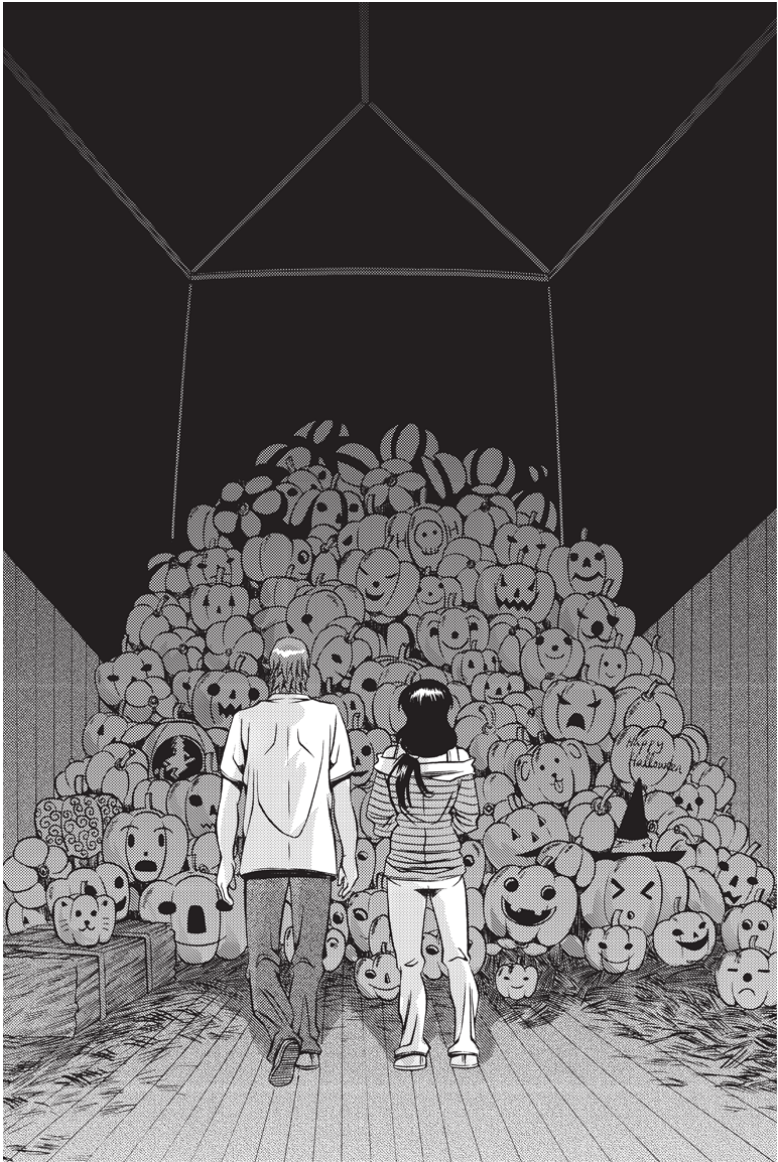
WITH ALL
THE DUST
THOSE THINGS
KICK UP,

"HELL ON
WHEELS"
WON'T NOTICE
WE'VE CHECKED
OUT--



-- UNTIL
WE'VE HAD
A CHANCE TO
CIRCLE BACK
TO THAT
BARN--

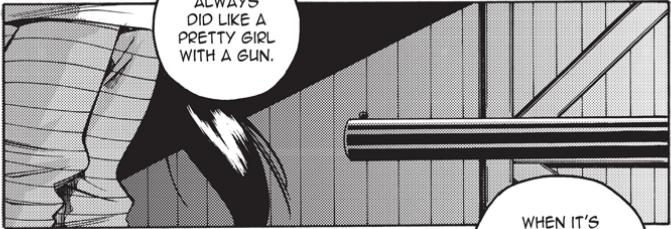




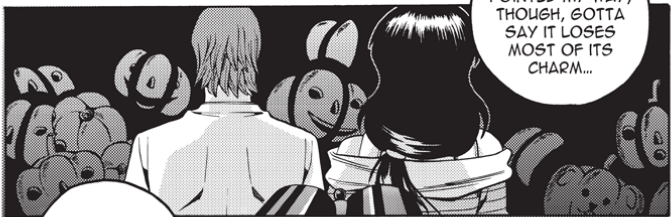
KA-CHIK



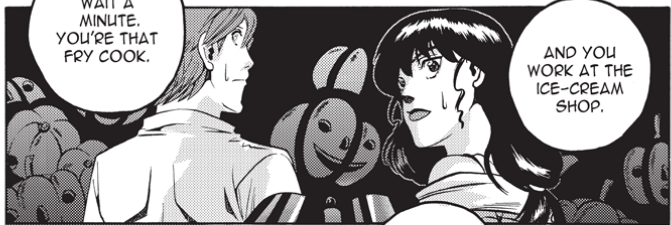
ALWAYS
DID LIKE A
PRETTY GIRL
WITH A GUN.



WHEN IT'S
POINTED MY WAY,
THOUGH, GOTTA
SAY IT LOSES
MOST OF ITS
CHARM...

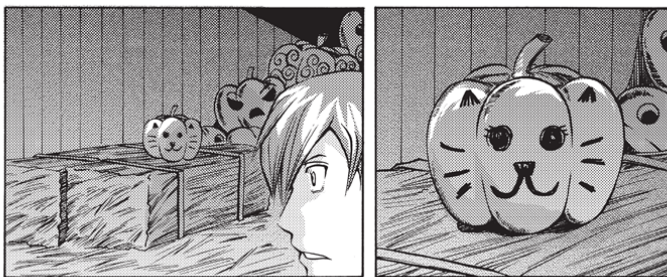


WAIT A
MINUTE.
YOU'RE THAT
FRY COOK.



AND YOU
WORK AT THE
ICE-CREAM
SHOP.

YOU AREN'T
TOUGH
GUYS.





AND
WE'RE
TAKING
THIS.

BECAUSE
TOUGH GUYS
TAKE WHAT
THEY WANT.



A LITTLE GIRL
WAS CRYING
HER EYES OUT
OVER THIS.

TOUGH GUYS
TAKE CARE
OF LITTLE
GIRLS.

WHOA,
HEY NOW,
HOLD YOUR
HORSES.

THE PUMPKIN
ROLL IS ONE OF
OUR OLDEST
TRADITIONS.



LITTLE GIRL NEEDS
HER PUMPKIN.
WE'LL KILL TO GET
IT BACK TO HER.



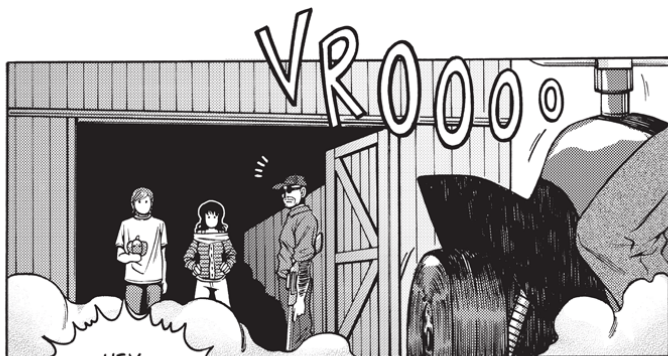
WELL,
NOT KILL.

WE'LL
AT LEAST
MAIM.



MR. ODD
ISN'T AS TOUGH
A TOUGH GUY
AS I AM.

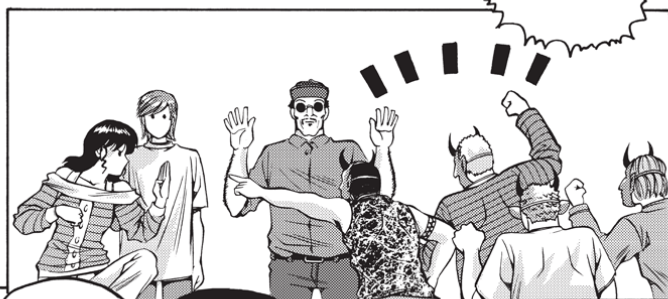
YOU TWO
SEEM A
LITTLE SCREWY
TO ME.



HEY,
THEY
DOUBLED
BACK!



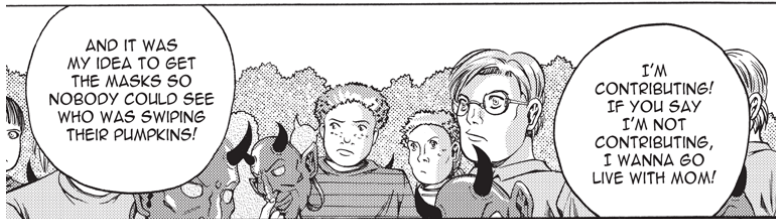
KEVIN'S
DAD'S
GOT 'EM!

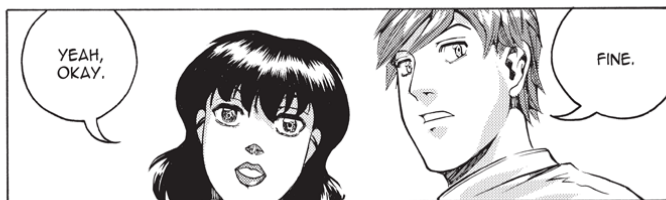
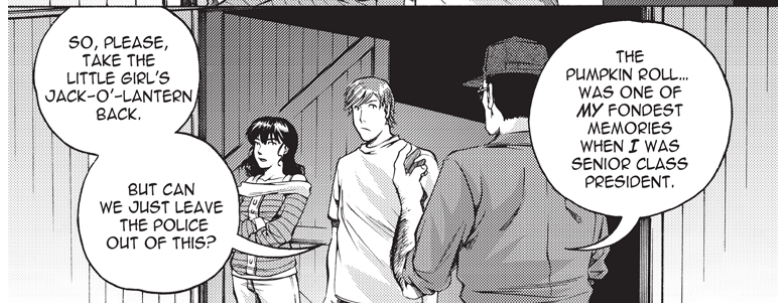


WE'RE
MORE THAN
A LITTLE SCREWY,
WHICH MAKES
US MUCHO
DANGEROUS.

I'M NOT SURE
THE SCREWY
TOUGH-GUY
SHITICK IS
THE WAY TO
PLAY THIS.









SO THE
SCREWY
TOUGH-GUY
SHTICK
WORKED
AFTER ALL.

JUST KEEP
WALKING.



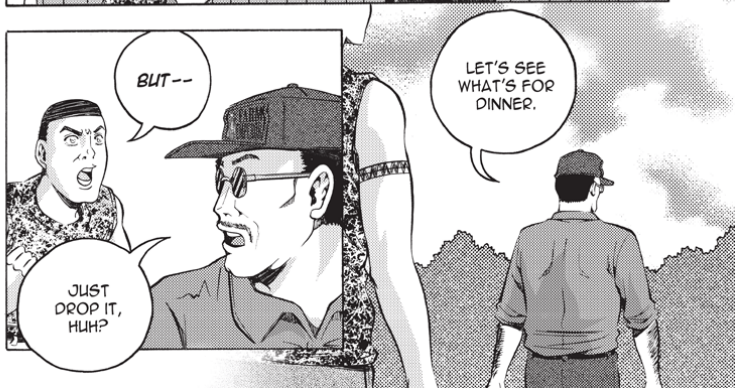
BUT

SHE

SHOT!

ME!

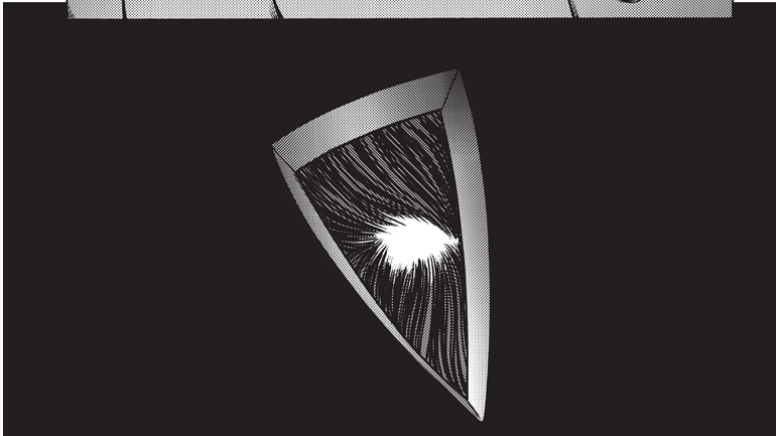
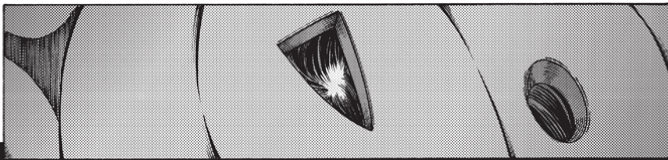
AT YOU,
JUNIOR.
SHE SHOT AT
YOU. BIG
DIFFERENCE.



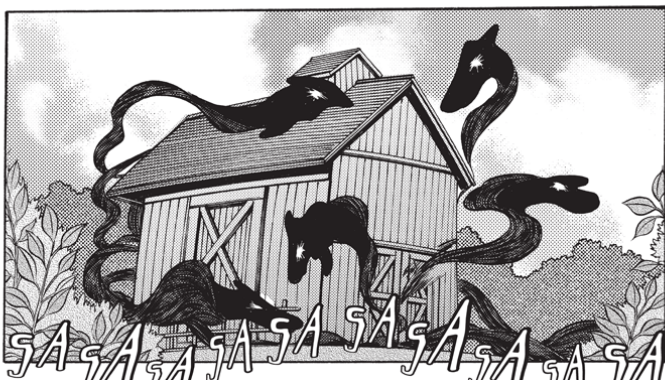
BUT --

JUST
DROP IT,
HUH?

LET'S SEE
WHAT'S FOR
DINNER.







SASA SASSA SASSA SASSA SASSA SASSA SASSA SASSA



A S A S A S A S A S A S A S A S A S A







WE JUST
MADE A
BLACK CAT
FEEL LUCKY.



BUT WE
LOST A GOOD
SIX HOURS
ON THAT
WILD GOOSE
CHASE.

I FIND IT
HARD TO BELIEVE
THE SENSE OF DREAD
I'VE BEEN FEELING
ALL DAY WAS CAUSED
BY A KINDERGARTNER
SEPARATED FROM
HER CLASS
PROJECT.



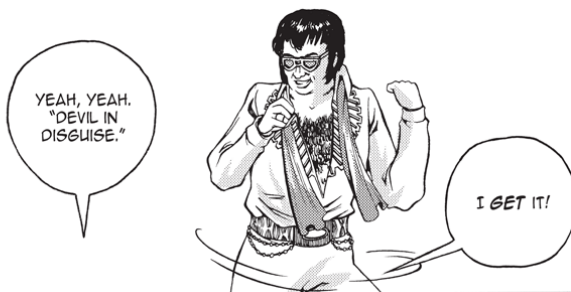
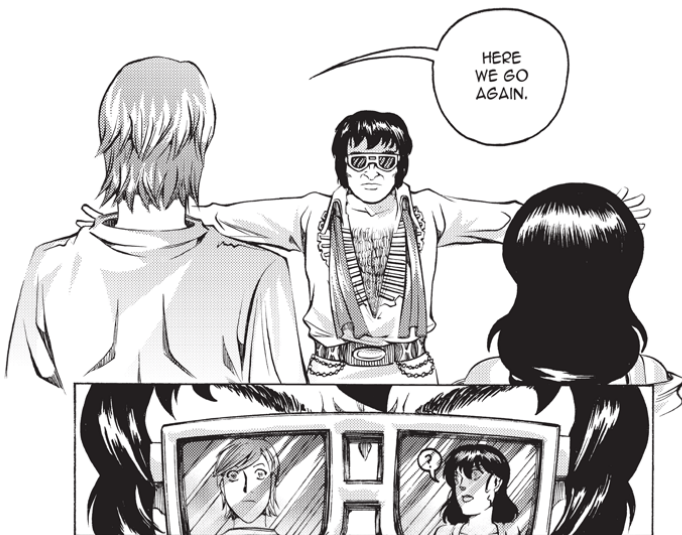
NOT WHEN
YOU PUT IT
THAT WAY.

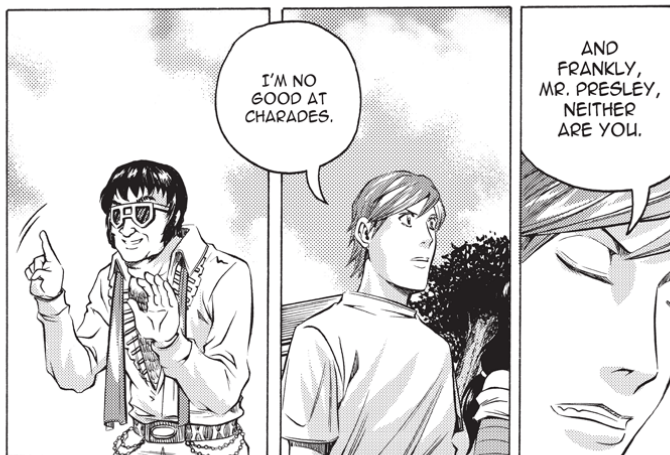
'COURSE,
I DON'T THINK
ELVIS WOULD HAVE
MADE SUCH A
BIG DEAL ABOUT
THE CASE OF THE
MISSING JACK-O,
EITHER.

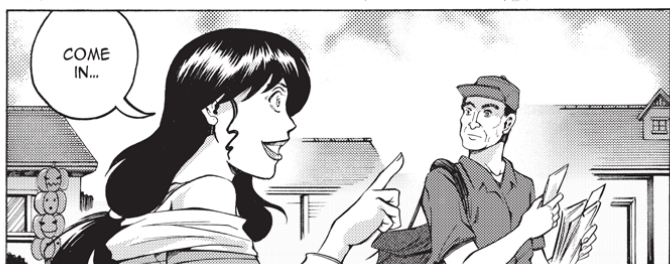
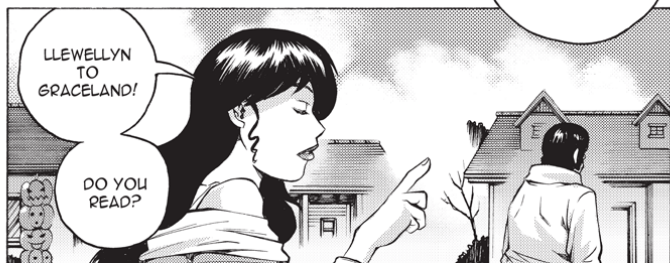
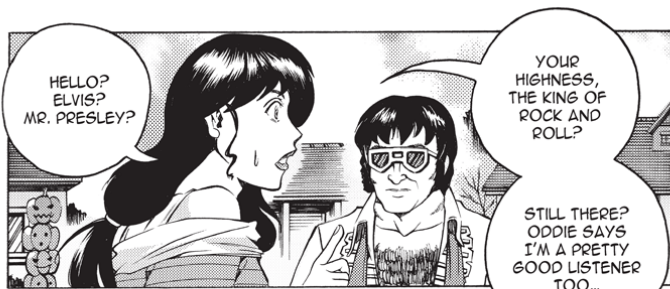
NO.

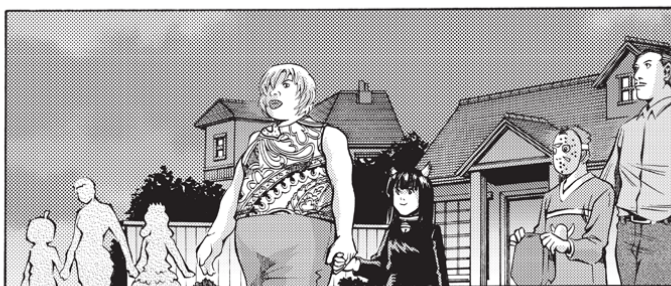
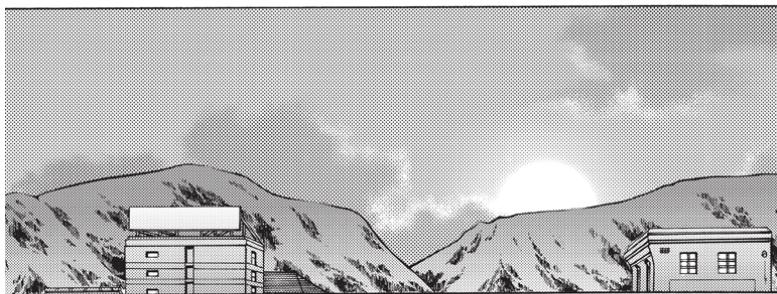
HE
WOULDN'T.

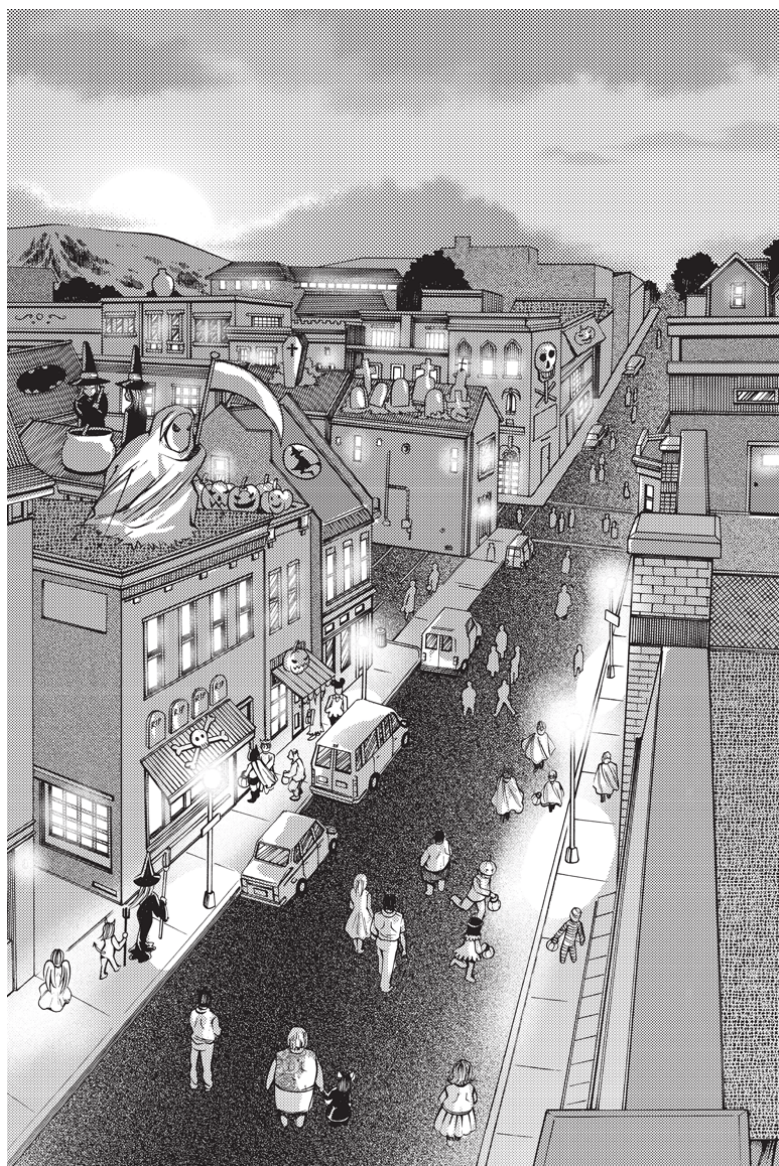


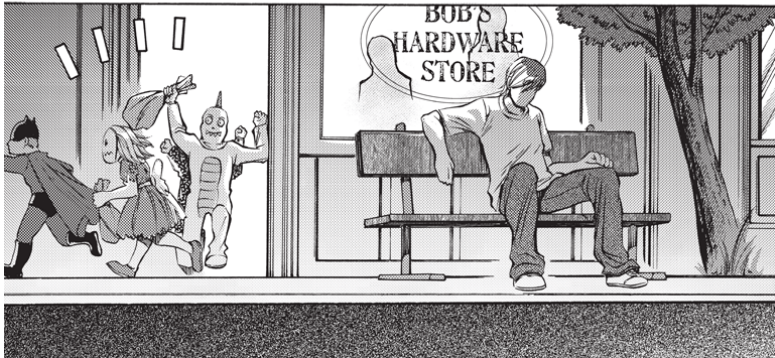
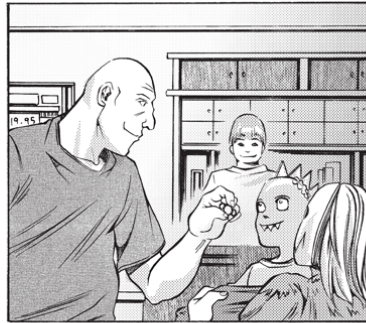
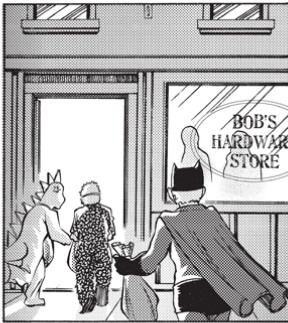


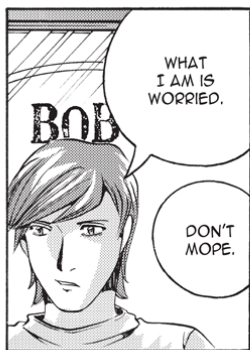


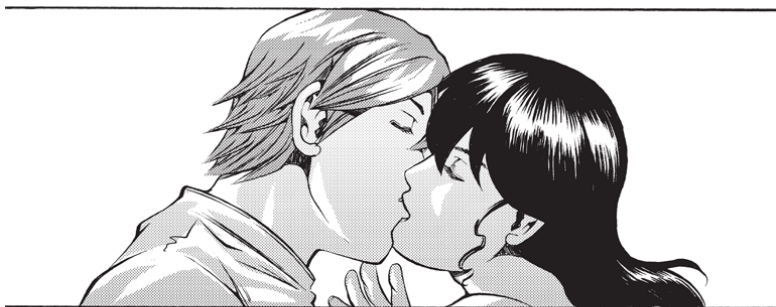












GONNA
DO IT
AGAIN.

DEFINITELY
A DOER.



AH, IF I WERE
YOUNG AND
ONE-THIRD
MY SIZE,

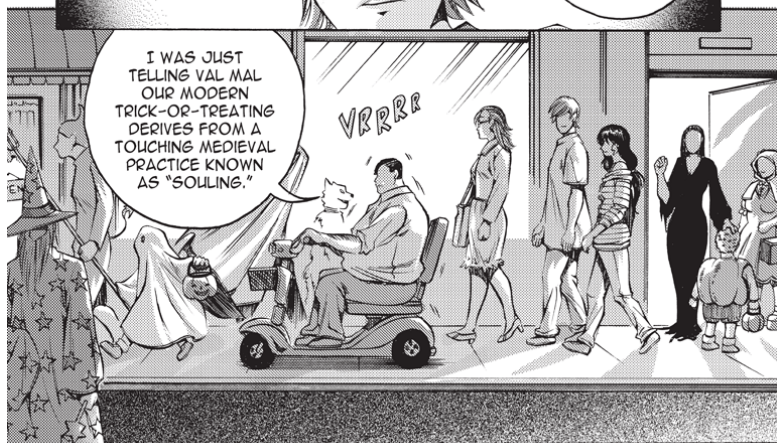
YOU'D HAVE
COMPETITION
FOR THAT
GIRL.

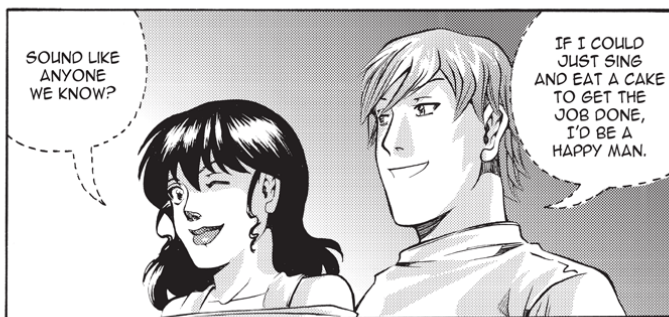
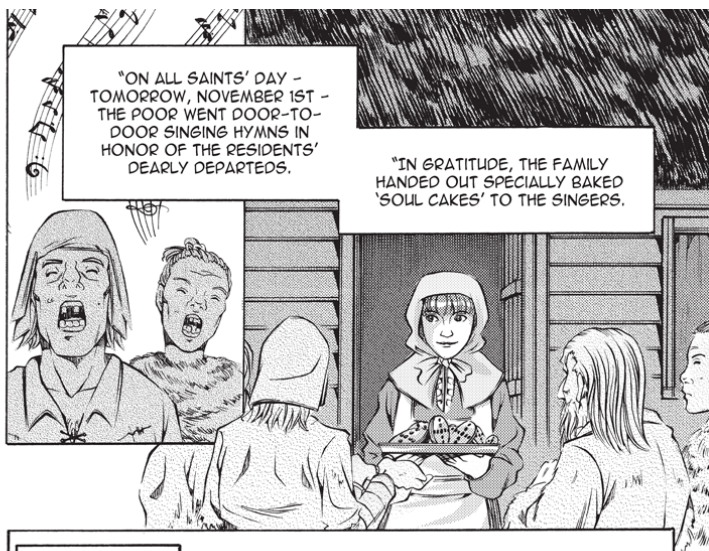


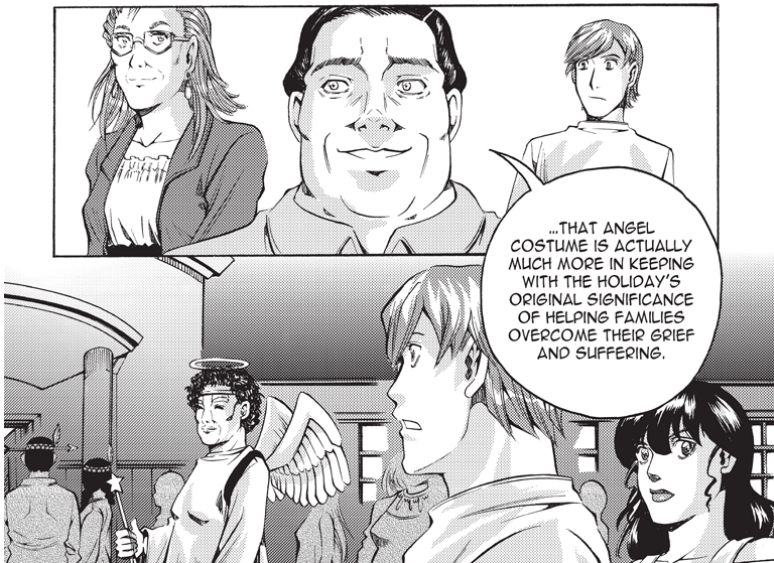
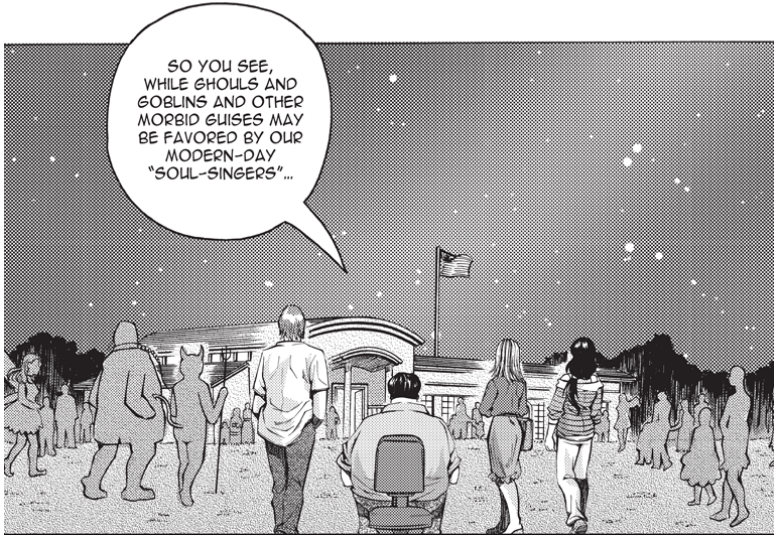
IT'S A
MAN'S MIND
THAT
MATTERS.

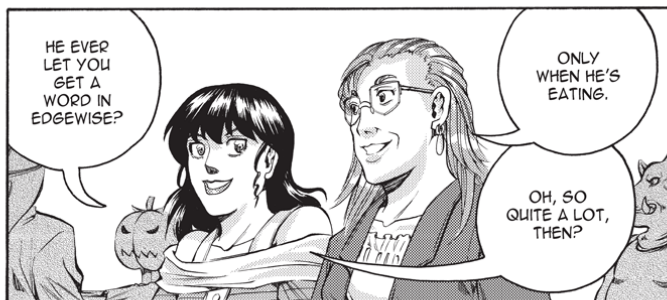
THEN I
SUPPOSE
WE'LL BE
MARRIED NEXT
SATURDAY.

MEANWHILE,
MIZZ MALEVOLENT
AND I ARE
EN ROUTE TO AN
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
STUDY OF THE SAFE
HALLOWEEN
CELEBRATION.

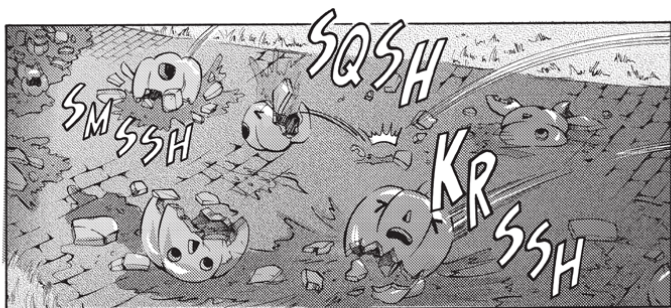
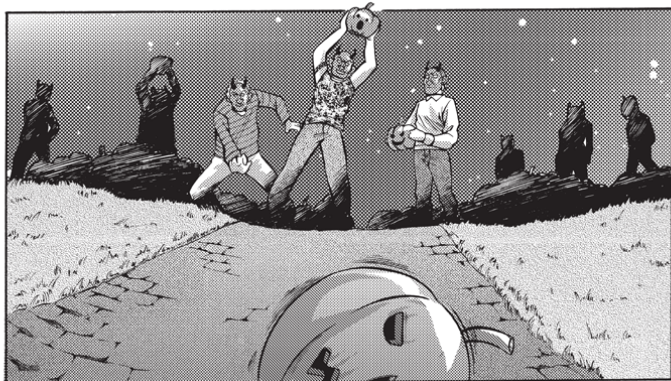














WHATEVER
IS GOING
TO
HAPPEN...

WHY, LOOK
WHO'S JOINED
US FOR THE
FRIGHT FEST!
OUR FIRST
GUEST!

EEEEEEEE!!

DOING

...IS
STARTING
RIGHT
NOW.

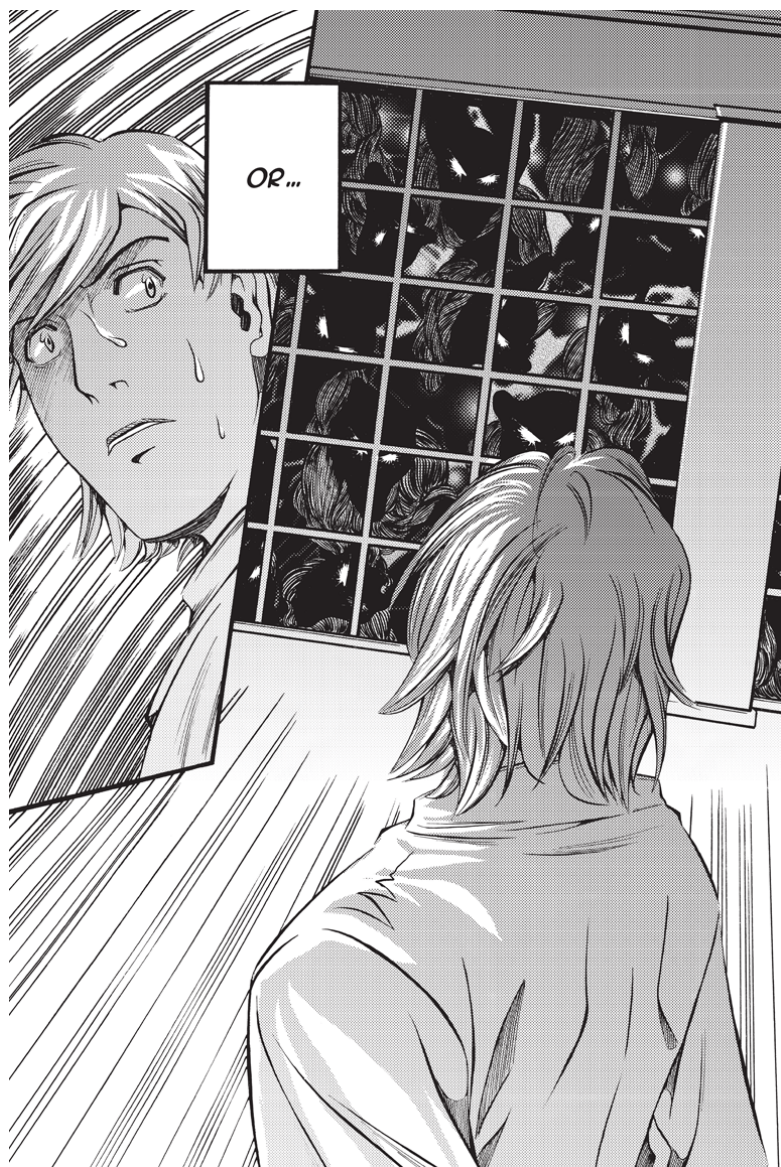
HERE,
THIS BAG
IS FILLED
WITH WITCH'S
HAIR.

REACH IN
WITHOUT
LOOKING---
IF YOU
DARE---

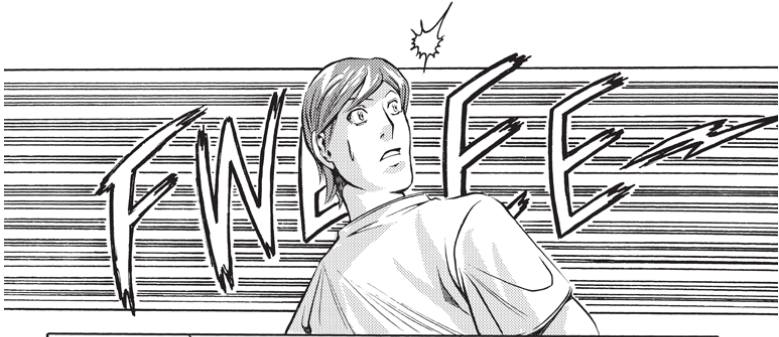
-- AND
WHOEVER PULLS
OUT THE **ONE
BLOOD-RED
STRAND** GETS
THE FIRST WHACK AT
OUR SPIDER
PINATA!

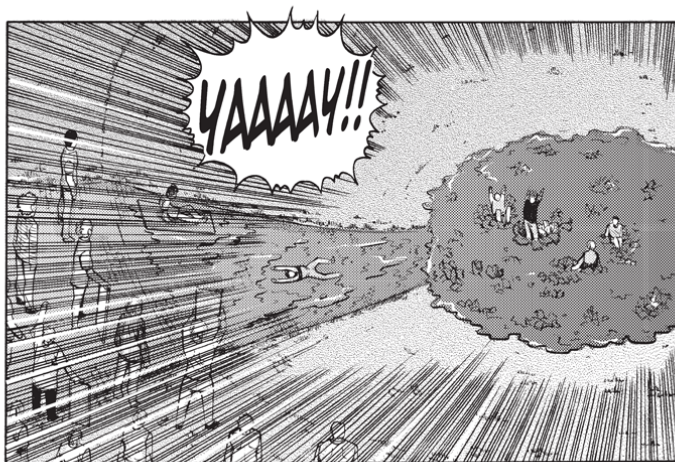
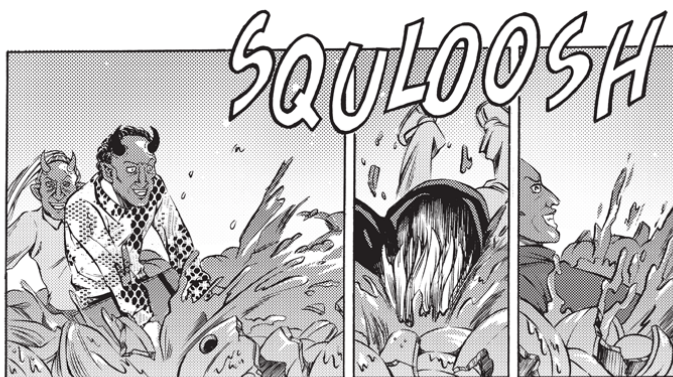
A
BODACH!
ONLY ONE,
THANK
GOD.

MAYBE
I'M OVER-
REACTING.

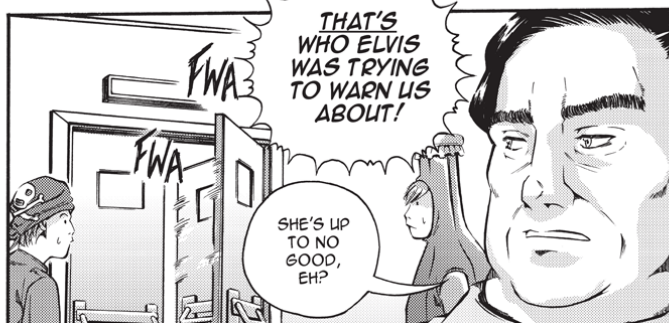
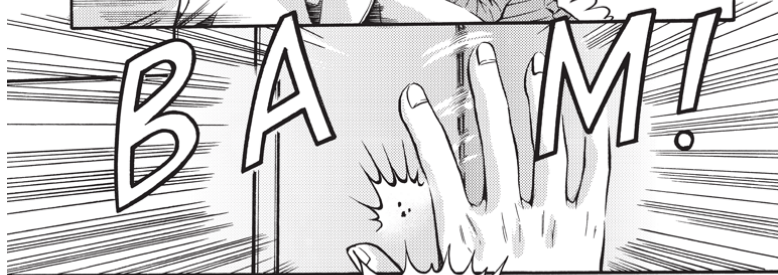


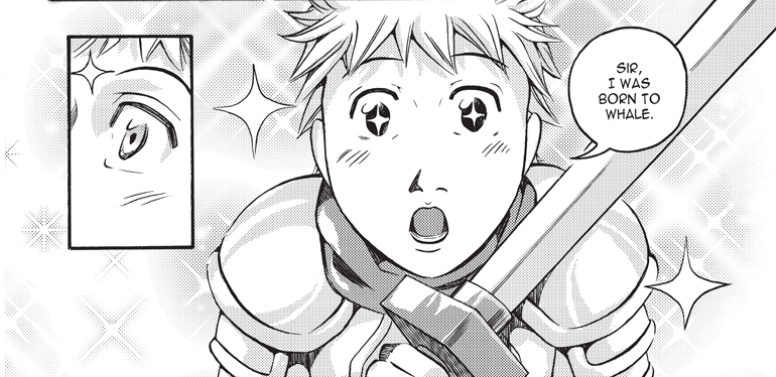
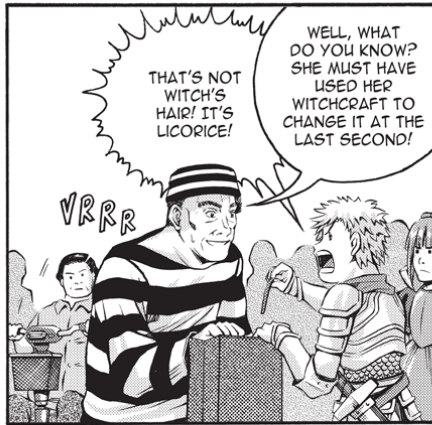


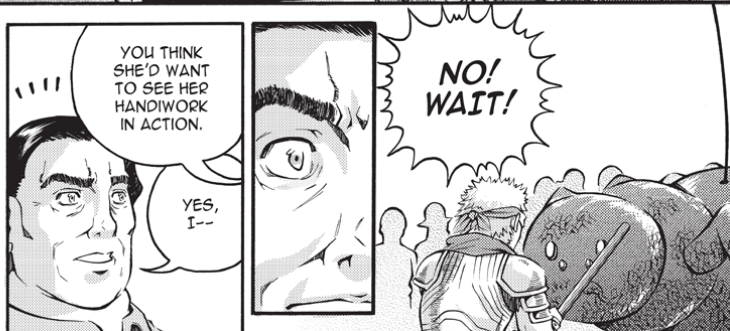
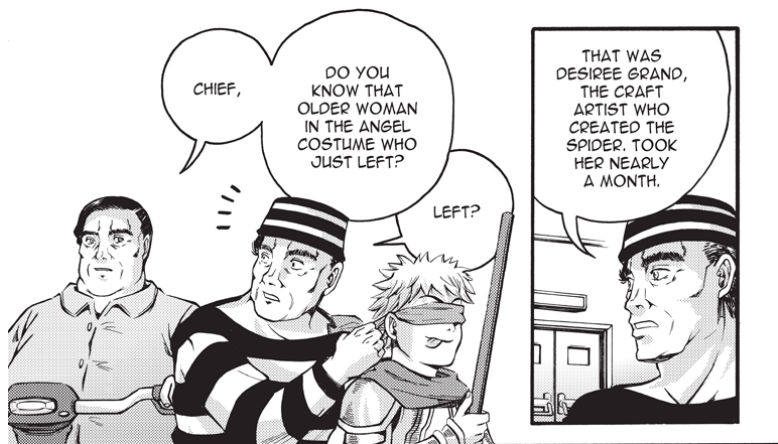


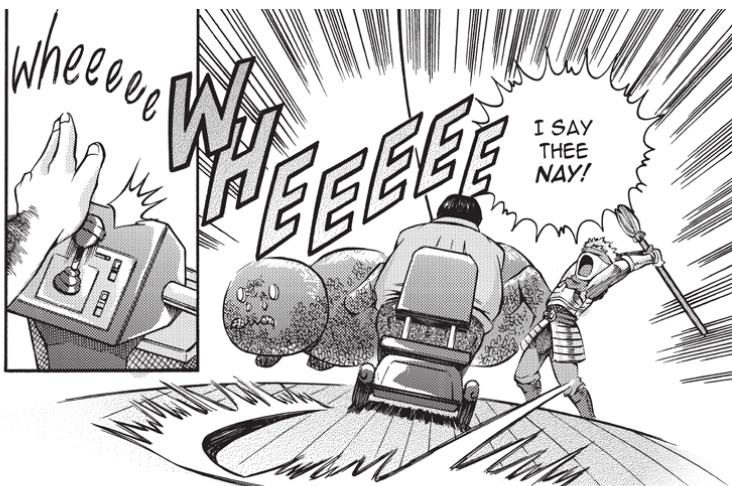


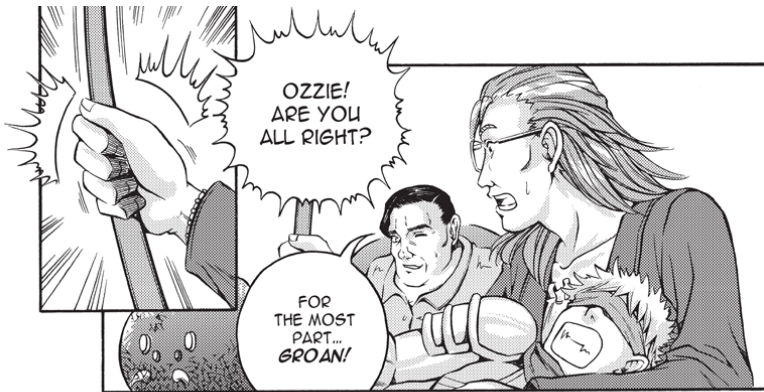


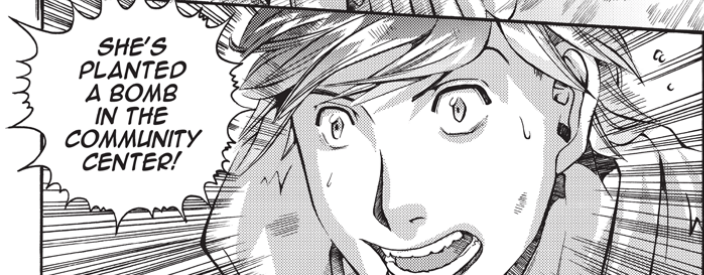


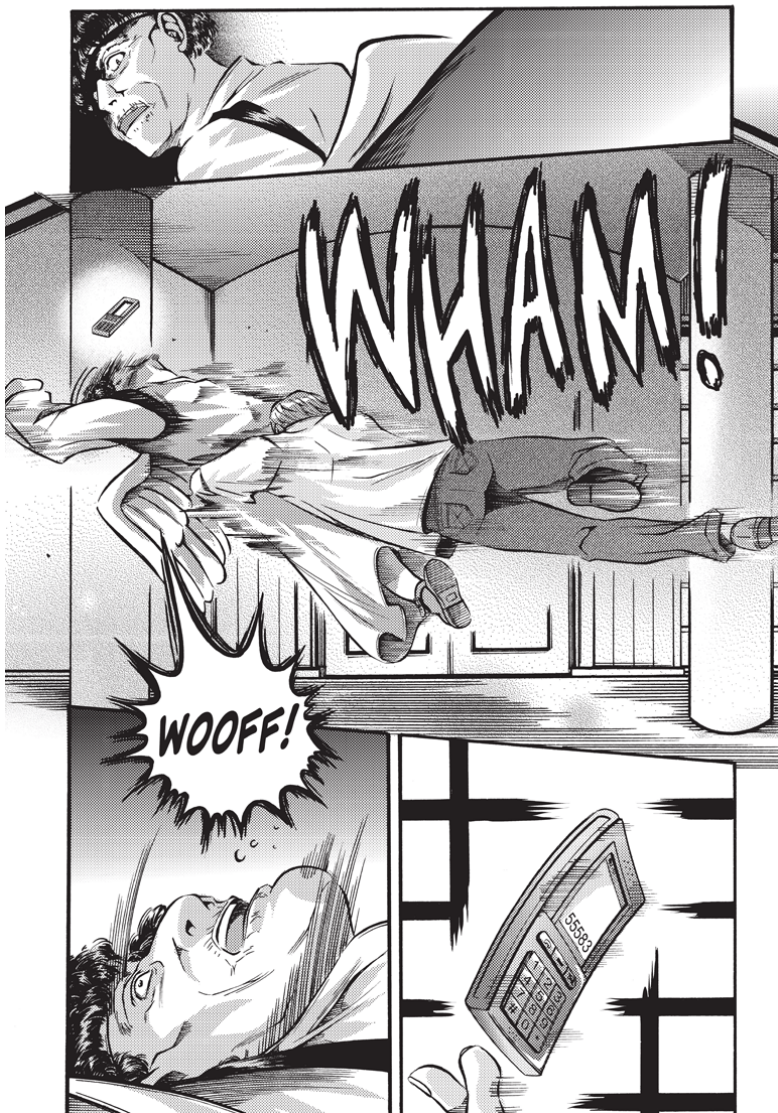


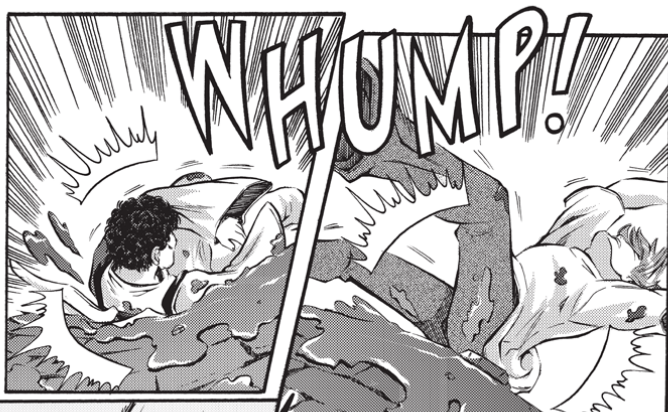
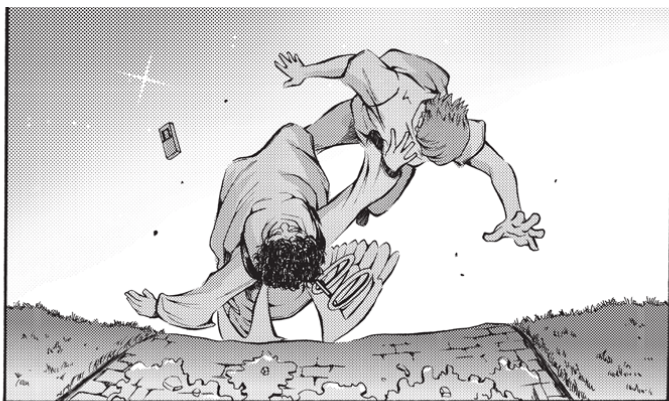


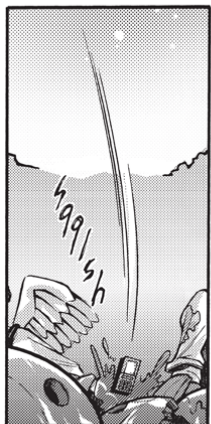
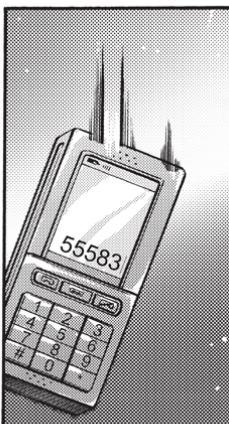
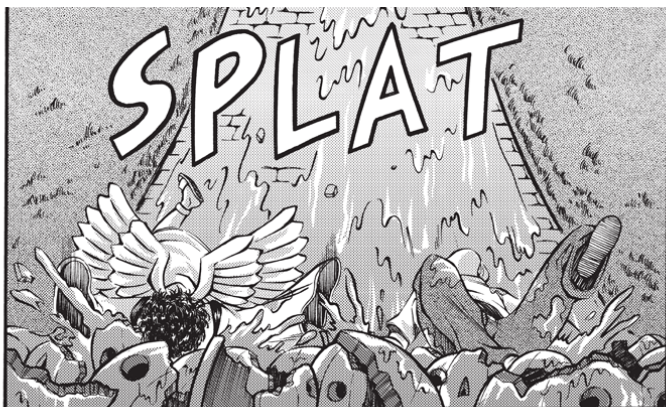


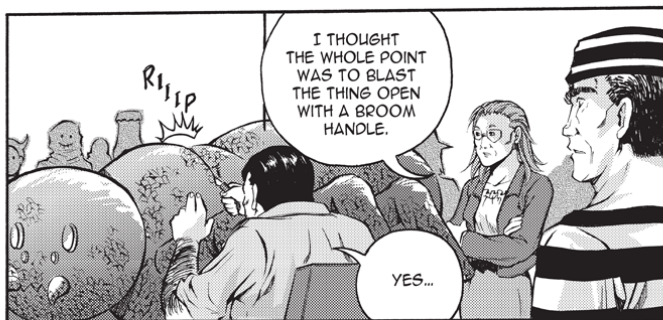
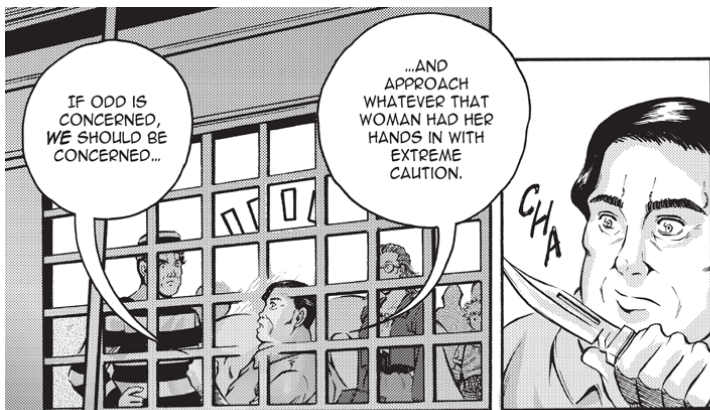


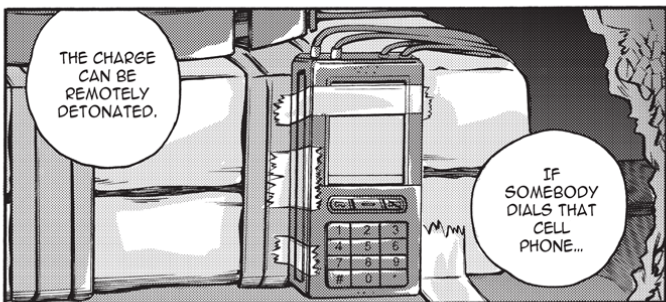
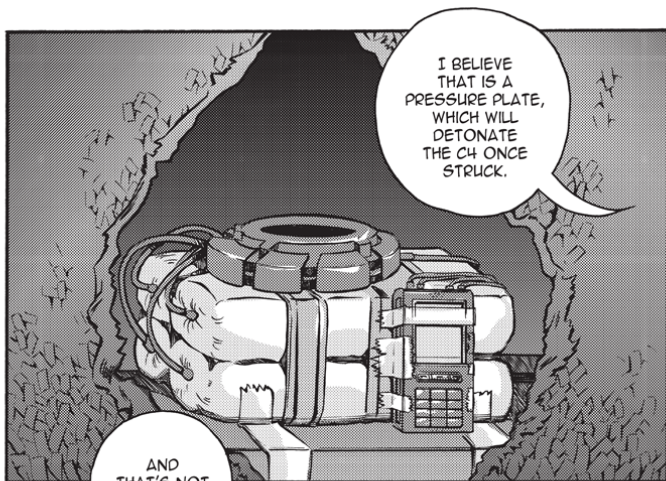
















BY WHICH
I MEAN **YOU**
WILL TAKE CARE
OF THE BOMB,
DEAR VALERIE.

WHAT?!

WHY
ME?



I'M AFRAID THE
GOOD LORD HAS
NOT BLESSED
THESE HANDS
WITH THE DIGITAL
DEXTERITY
REQUIRED
FOR SUCH A
DELICATE
TASK.

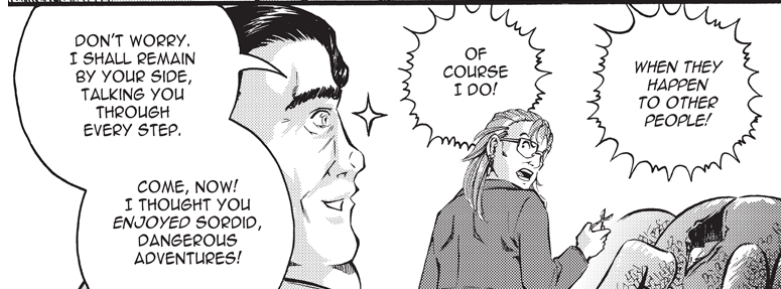
I DON'T RECALL
THE GOOD LORD
MAKING YOU EAT
THREE CHICKEN-FRIED
STEAKS A
DAY FOR TWO
DECADES.



INSTEAD OUR
FATE LIES IN
FINGERS THAT
WIELD THE RED
PEN FOR A
LIVING--

--BUT WHAT YOU
EDIT OUT TODAY
SHALL SAVE THE
LIVES OF EVERY
MAN, WOMAN, AND
CHILD IN THIS
BUILDING!

THIS IS SOME
KIND OF REPPRESSED
HOSTILITY FOR ALL
THOSE TIMES I
ADVISED YOU TO USE
FEWER ADJECTIVES.

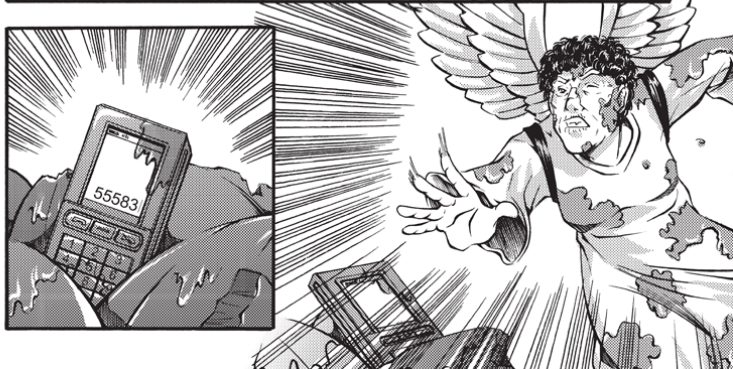
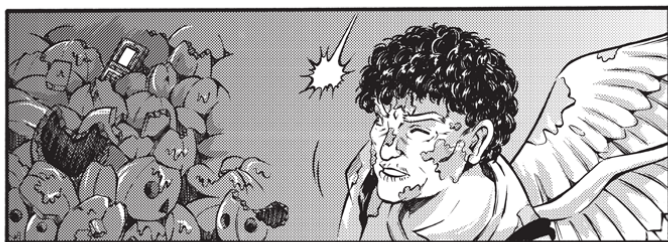
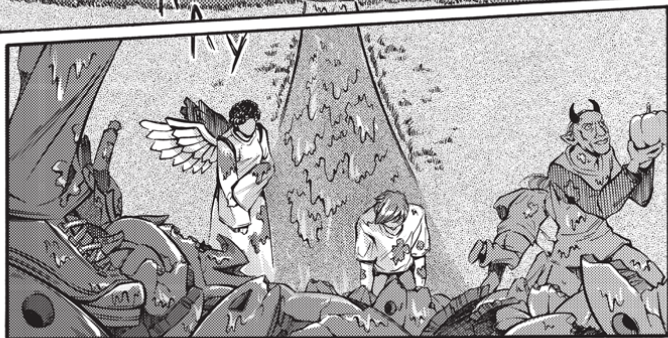


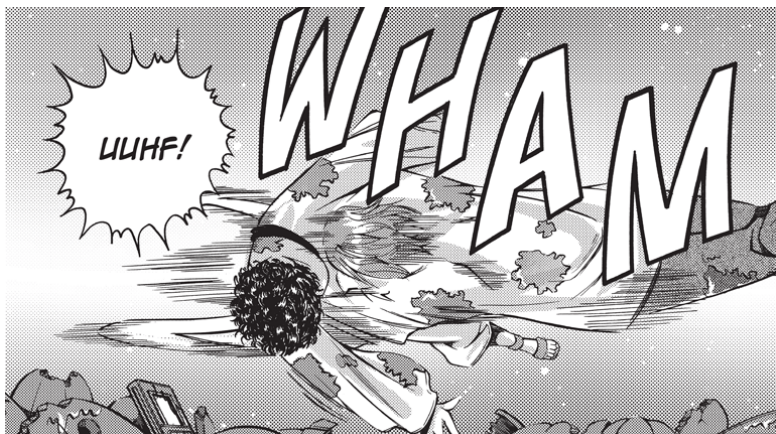
DON'T WORRY.
I SHALL REMAIN
BY YOUR SIDE,
TALKING YOU
THROUGH
EVERY STEP.

COME, NOW!
I THOUGHT YOU
ENJOYED SORDID,
DANGEROUS
ADVENTURES!

OF
COURSE
I DO!

WHEN THEY
HAPPEN
TO OTHER
PEOPLE!





WAIT.

ISN'T THIS
THE WOMAN
WHO HELPED
ME EARLIER?



I'M ACTU
DESIR

THE ONE
IN THE
PARK...

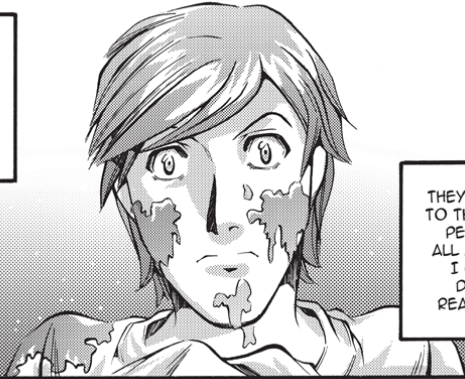
DESIREE,
HAVE YOU
EEN SITTING
HERE
AWHILE?

ENOUGH,
MY OLD BONES
HAVE LOCKED
IN PLACE.

...MY
PSYCHIC
MAGNETISM
LED ME TO?

MAYBE
NOT THE F
WHO LO
SUSPIC
YOU SH
BE WOR
ABOL

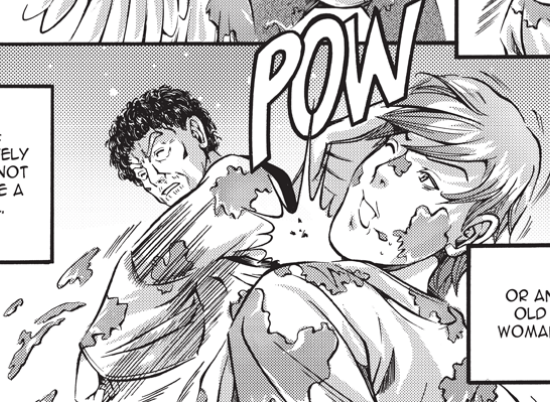
MY
POWERS
NEVER
FAILED
ME!



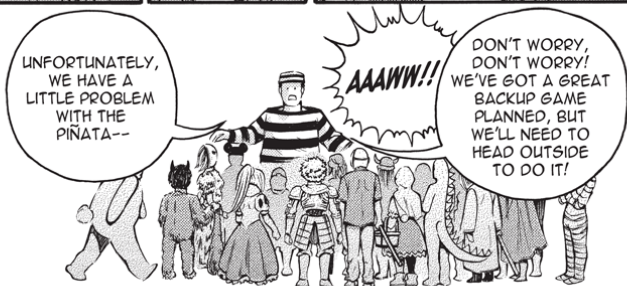
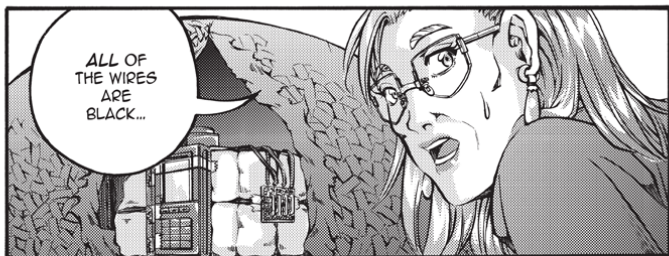
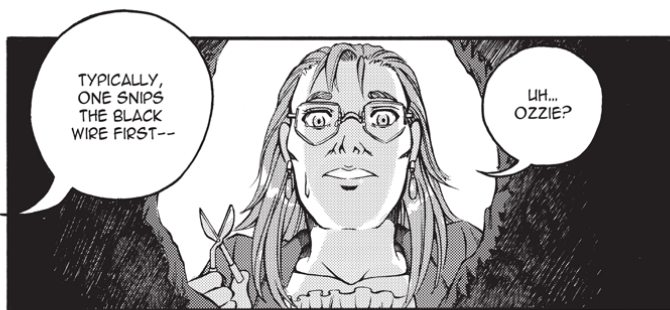
THEY LED ME
TO THE RIGHT
PERSON
ALL ALONG,
I JUST
DIDN'T
REALIZE--

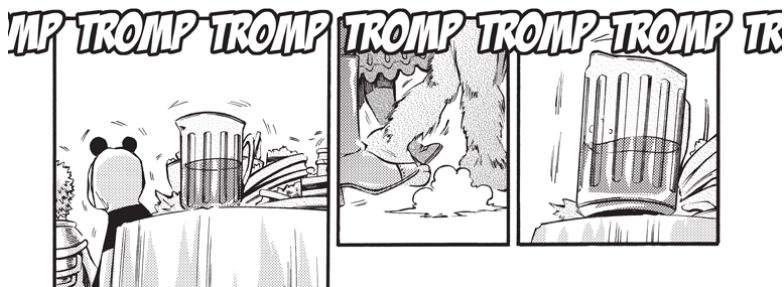
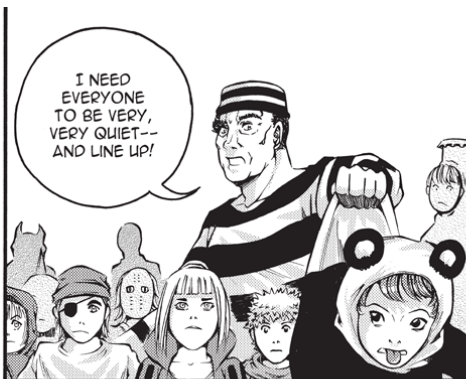


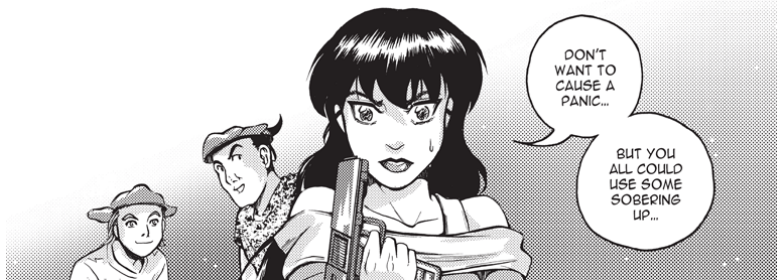
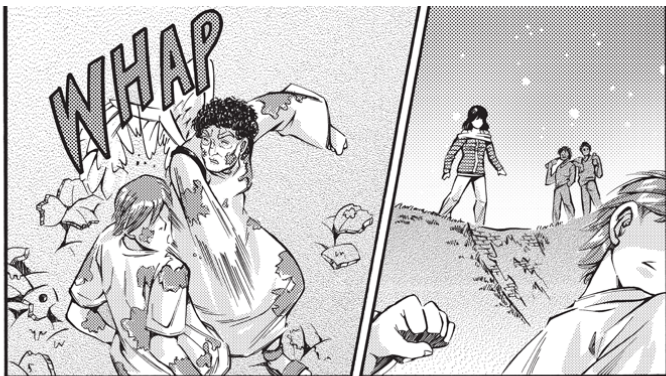
SHE
DEFINITELY
DOES NOT
HIT LIKE A
GIRL.



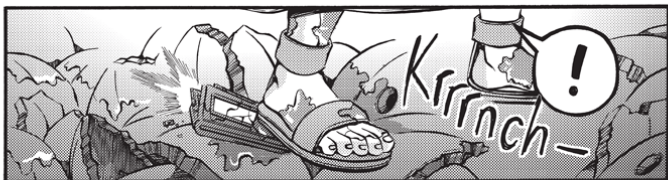
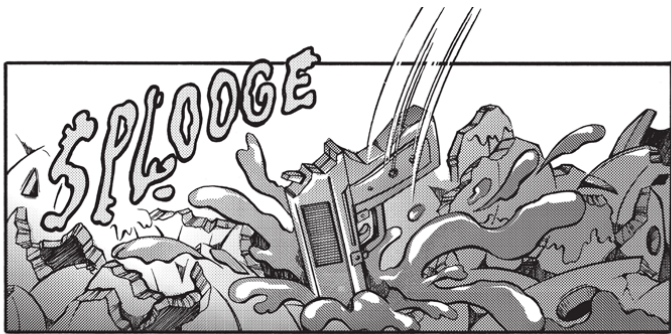
OR AN
OLD
WOMAN.

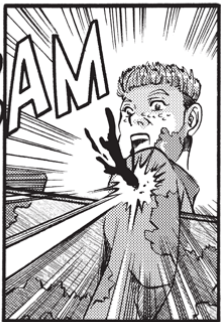
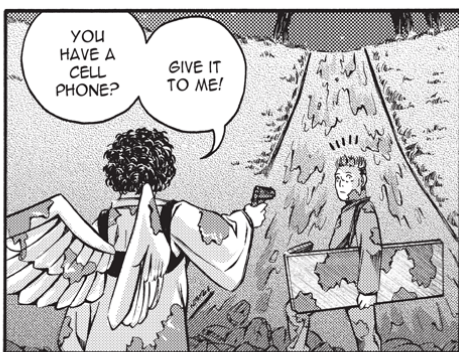


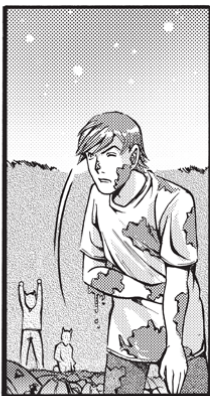


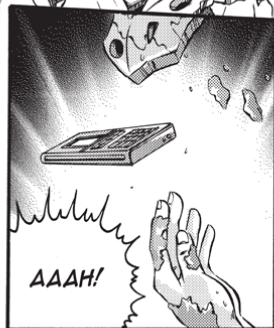
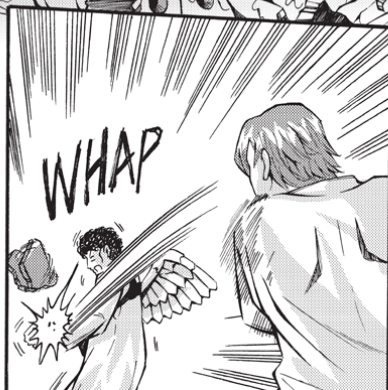
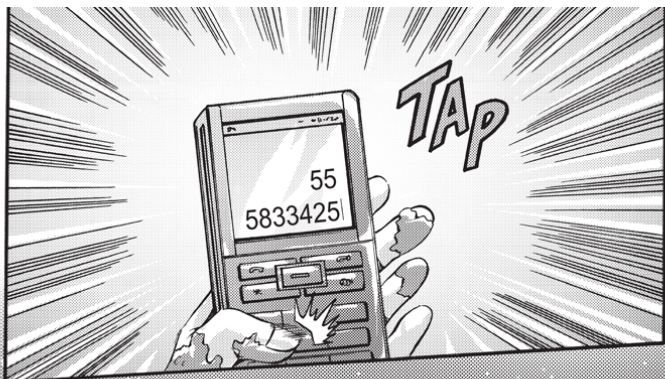




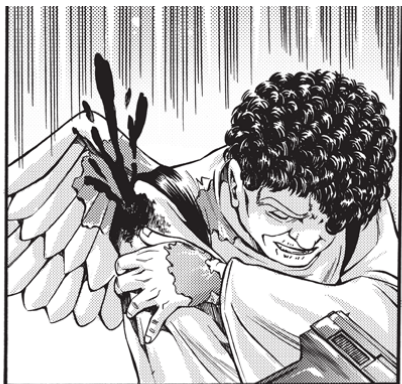


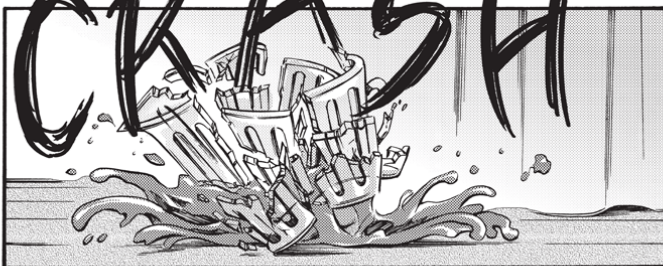
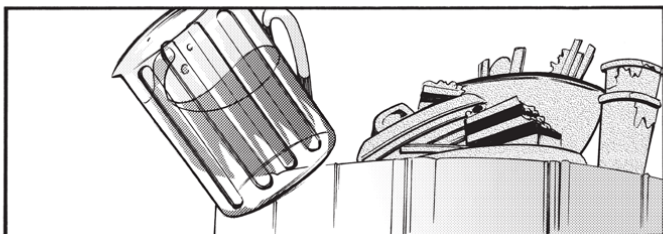
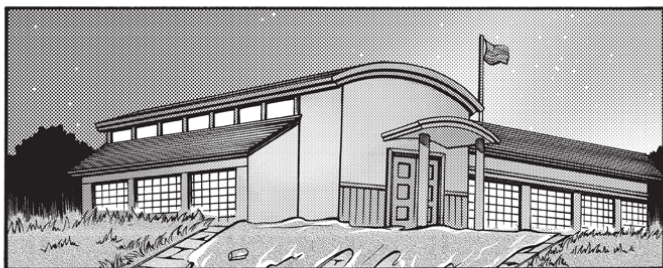




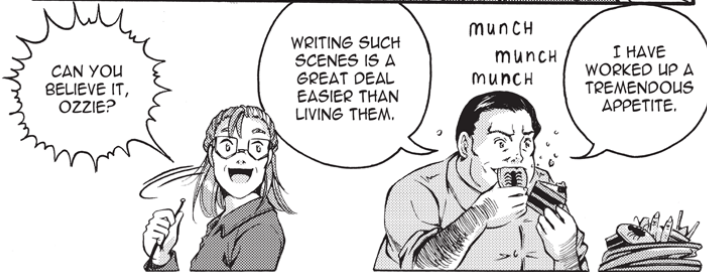
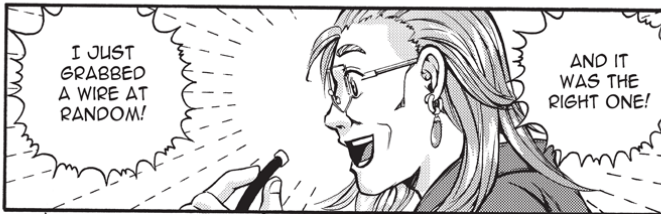
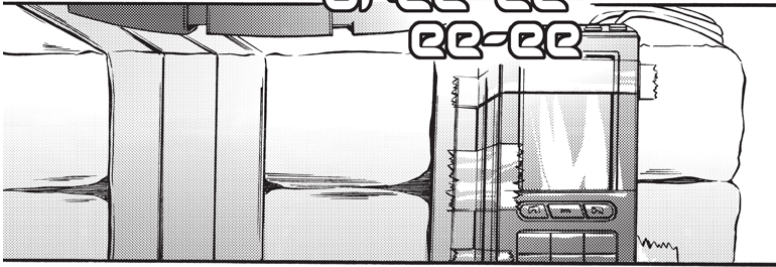




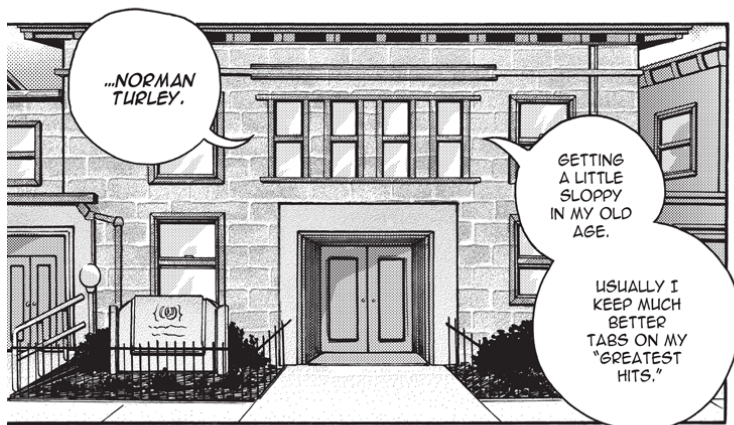




bree-ee-ee-ee-ee
bree-ee-
ee-ee









I HADN'T
EVEN REALIZED
TURLEY
WAS UP FOR
PAROLE.

AS NEAR
AS WE CAN
PIECE
TOGETHER,
THIS IS WHAT
HAPPENED:

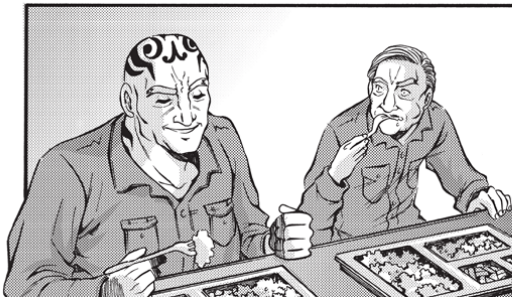


"BACK IN
AUGUST, WHEN
THE CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE
PUT ME IN
CHARGE OF
THE SAFE
HALLOWEEN
CELEBRATION...



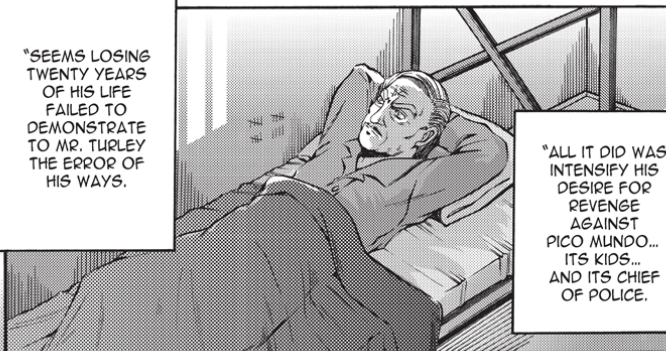
"...I GOT THE
NAME OF
DESIREE GRAND,
A CRAFT ARTIST,
FROM A FRIEND.
THOUGHT IT MIGHT
BE FUN TO HAVE
SOMETHING
SPECIAL MADE
JUST FOR THE
EVENT.

"THE SPIDER
PINATA
WAS HER
IDEA.



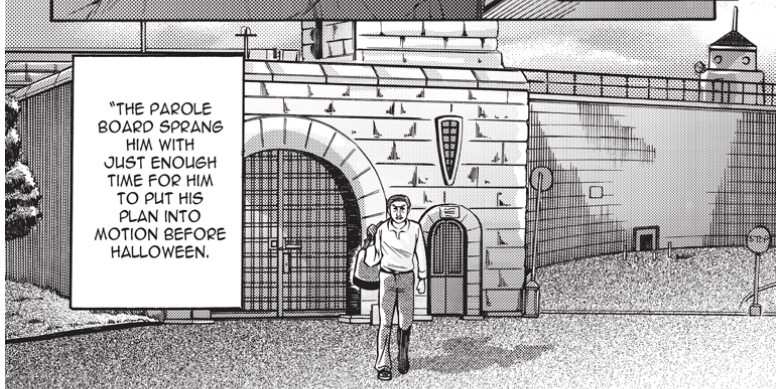
"WHAT I DIDN'T
KNOW WAS
THAT DESIREE'S
BROTHER IS A
THREE-STRIKES
LOSER WHO
WAS ONE OF
TURLEY'S
MESS BUDDIES
UP IN FOLSOM.

"SEEMS LOSING
TWENTY YEARS
OF HIS LIFE
FAILED TO
DEMONSTRATE
TO MR. TURLEY
THE ERROR OF
HIS WAYS.



"ALL IT DID WAS
INTENSIFY HIS
DESIRE FOR
REVENGE
AGAINST
PICO MUNDO...
ITS KIDS...
AND ITS CHIEF
OF POLICE.

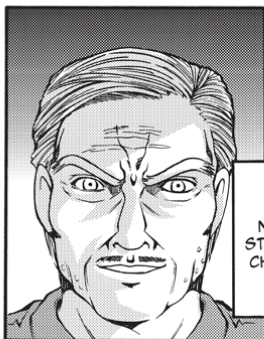
"THE PAROLE
BOARD SPRANG
HIM WITH
JUST ENOUGH
TIME FOR HIM
TO PUT HIS
PLAN INTO
MOTION BEFORE
HALLOWEEN.

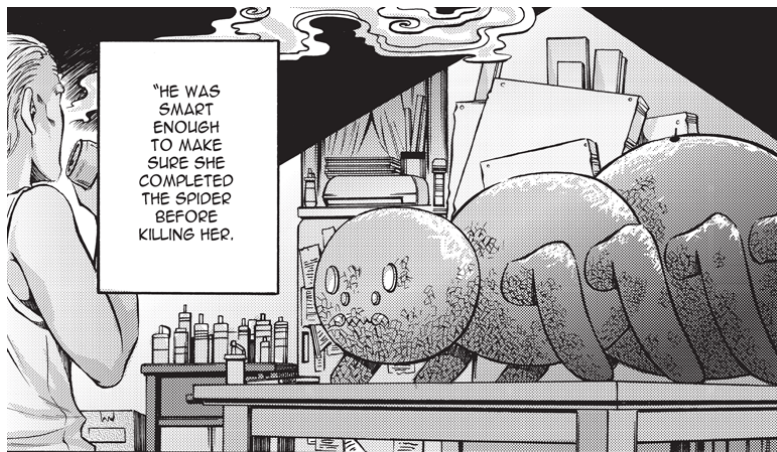


"DESIREE'S
IDIOT
BROTHER
DIDN'T WARN
HER HE HAD
GIVEN
TURLEY HER
ADDRESS.

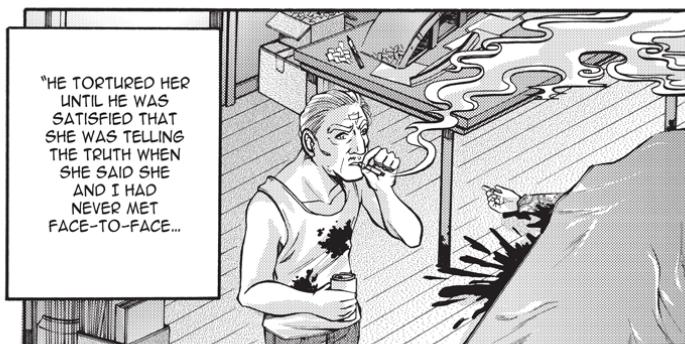


"SHE
NEVER
STOOD A
CHANCE.

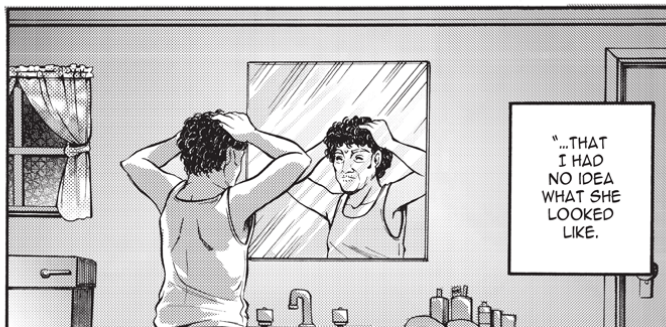




"HE WAS
SMART
ENOUGH
TO MAKE
SURE SHE
COMPLETED
THE SPIDER
BEFORE
KILLING HER.

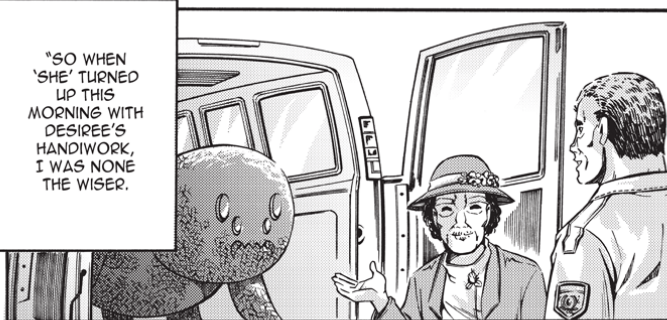


"HE TORTURED HER
UNTIL HE WAS
SATISFIED THAT
SHE WAS TELLING
THE TRUTH WHEN
SHE SAID SHE
AND I HAD
NEVER MET
FACE-TO-FACE...



"...THAT
I HAD
NO IDEA
WHAT SHE
LOOKED
LIKE.

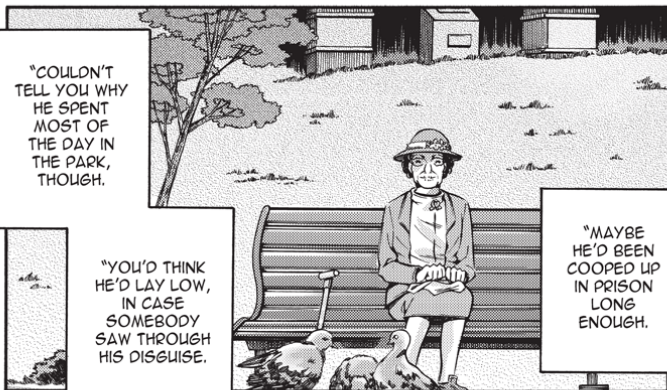
"SO WHEN
'SHE' TURNED
UP THIS
MORNING WITH
DESIREE'S
HANDIWORK,
I WAS NONE
THE WISER.



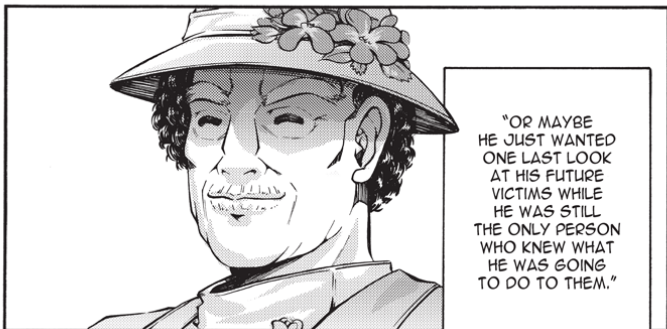
"COULDN'T
TELL YOU WHY
HE SPENT
MOST OF
THE DAY IN
THE PARK,
THOUGH.

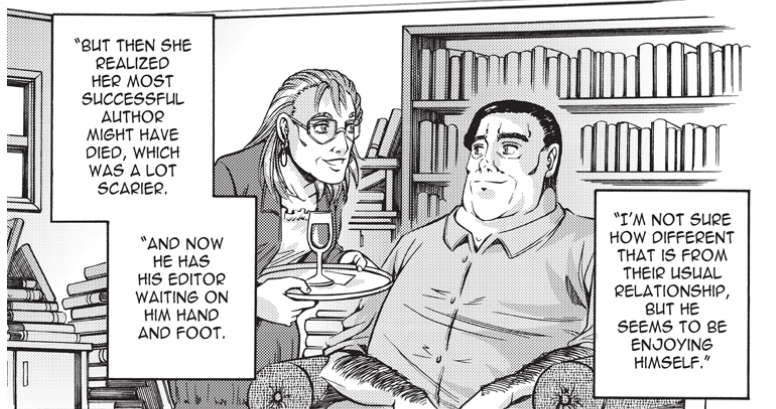
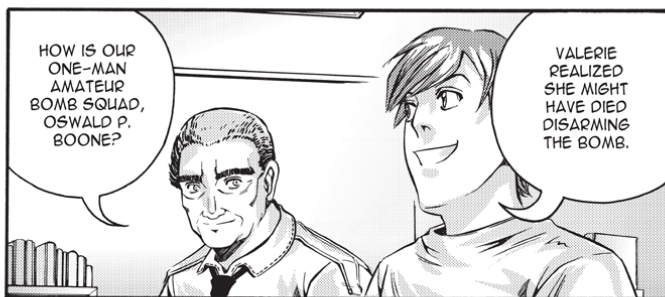
"YOU'D THINK
HE'D LAY LOW,
IN CASE
SOMEBODY
SAW THROUGH
HIS DISGUISE.

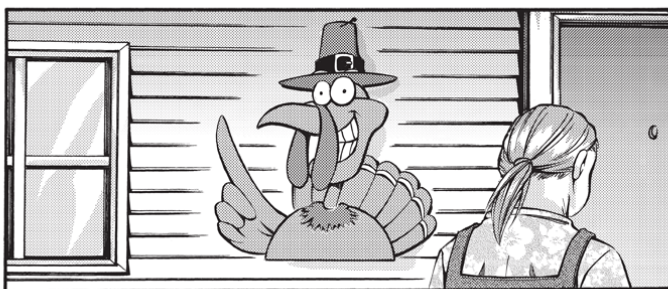
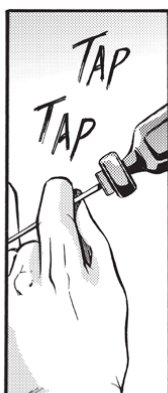
"MAYBE
HE'D BEEN
COOPED UP
IN PRISON
LONG
ENOUGH.

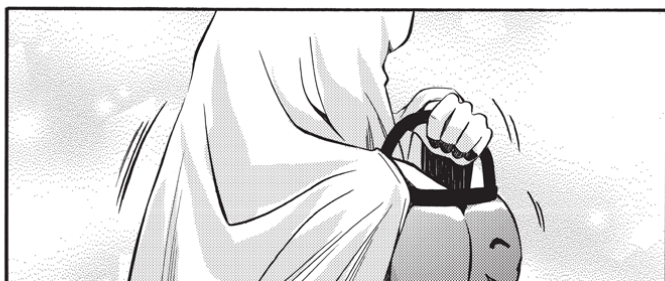
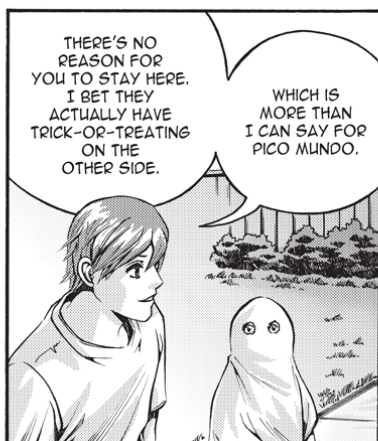
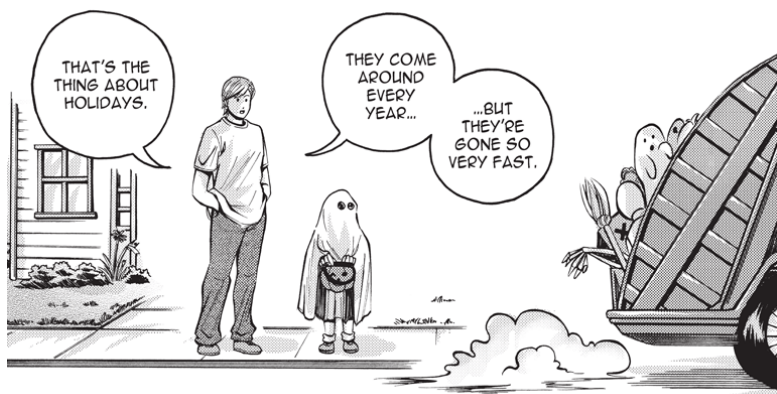


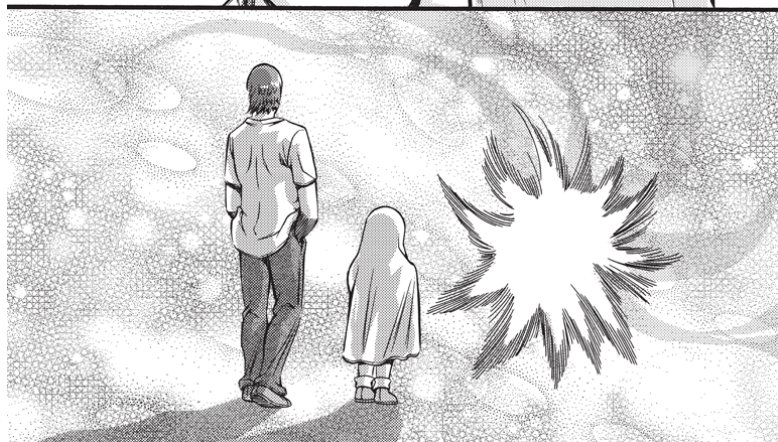
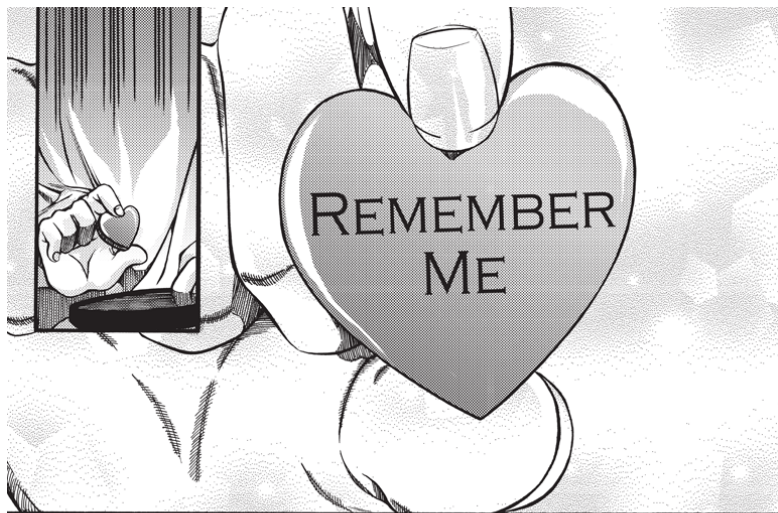
"OR MAYBE
HE JUST WANTED
ONE LAST LOOK
AT HIS FUTURE
VICTIMS WHILE
HE WAS STILL
THE ONLY PERSON
WHO KNEW WHAT
HE WAS GOING
TO DO TO THEM."

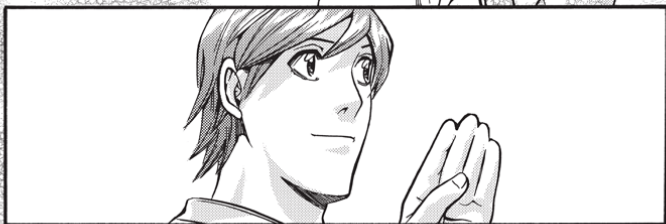
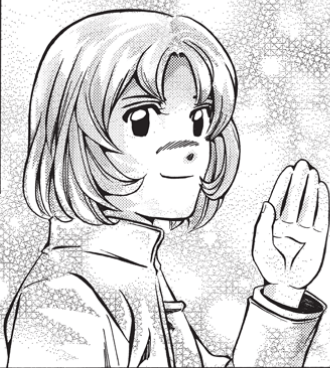


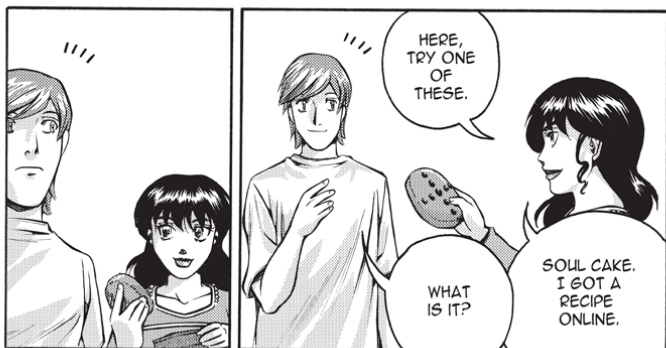












ABOUT THE CREATORS

DEAN KOONTZ is the author of many #1 *New York Times* bestsellers. He lives with his wife, Gerda, in Southern California.

QUEENIE CHAN was born in Hong Kong and emigrated to Australia when she was six years old. She is the creator of the mystery-horror graphic novel series *The Dreaming* and illustrated two graphic novels based on Dean Koontz's character Odd Thomas. She provided art for the *Boy's Book of Positive Quotations* by Steve Deger and draws a number of online comic strips on her personal website: www.queeniechan.com

FRED VAN LENTE is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Incredible Hercules* (with Greg Pak) and three entries in the *Marvel Zombies* series, as well as the American Library Association award-winning *Action Philosophers*. His original graphic novel *Cowboys & Aliens* (co-written with Andrew Foley) is being adapted into motion picture form by Dreamworks and Universal. Visit his website at www.fredvanlente.com

Odd's adventures continue in a series of full-length novels by Dean Koontz. The first novel is *Odd Thomas*, which was excerpted in the graphic novel *In Odd We Trust*. Here you can read a sample chapter of *Forever Odd*, second in the series. When a childhood friend disappears, Odd discovers something worse than a dead body ... and embarks on a heart-stopping battle of will and wits with an enemy of exceptional cunning.

ONE

WAKING, I HEARD A WARM WIND STRUMMING the loose screen at the open window, and I thought *Stormy*, but it was not.

The desert air smelled faintly of roses, which were not in bloom, and of dust, which in the Mojave flourishes twelve months of the year.

Precipitation falls on the town of Pico Mundo only during our brief winter. This mild February night was not, however, sweetened by the scent of rain.

I hoped to hear the fading rumble of thunder. If a peal had awakened me, it must have been thunder in a dream.

Holding my breath, I lay listening to the silence, and felt the silence listening to me.

The nightstand clock painted glowing numbers on the gloom —2:41 A.M.

For a moment I considered remaining in bed. But these days I do not sleep as well as I did when I was young. I am twenty-one and much older than when I was twenty.

Certain that I had company, expecting to find two Elvises watching over me, one with a cocky smile and one with sad concern, I sat up and switched on the lamp.

A single Elvis stood in a corner: a life-size cardboard figure that had been part of a theater-lobby display for *Blue Hawaii*. In a Hawaiian shirt and a lei, he looked self-confident and happy.

Back in 1961, he'd had much to be happy about. *Blue Hawaii* was a hit film, and the album went to number one. He had six gold records that year, including "Can't Help Falling in Love," and he was falling in love with Priscilla Beaulieu.

Less happily, at the insistence of his manager, Tom Parker, he had turned down the lead in *West Side Story* in favor of

mediocre movie fare like *Follow That Dream*. Gladys Presley, his beloved mother, had been dead three years, and still he felt the loss of her, acutely. Only twenty-six, he'd begun to have weight problems.

Cardboard Elvis smiles eternally, forever young, incapable of error or regret, untouched by grief, a stranger to despair.

I envy him. There is no cardboard replica of me as I once was and as I can never be again.

The lamplight revealed another presence, as patient as he was desperate. Evidently he had been watching me sleep, waiting for me to wake.

I said, "Hello, Dr. Jessup."

Dr. Wilbur Jessup was incapable of a response. Anguish flooded his face. His eyes were desolate pools; all hope had drowned in those lonely depths.

"I'm sorry to see you here," I said.

He made fists of his hands, not with the intention of striking anything, but as an expression of frustration. He pressed his fists to his chest.

Dr. Jessup had never previously visited my apartment; and I knew in my heart that he no longer belonged in Pico Mundo. But I clung to denial, and I spoke to him again as I got out of bed.

"Did I leave the door unlocked?"

He shook his head. Tears blurred his eyes, but he did not wail or even whimper.

Fetching a pair of jeans from the closet, slipping into them, I said, "I've been forgetful lately."

He opened his fists and stared at his palms. His hands trembled. He buried his face in them.

"There's so much I'd like to forget," I continued as I pulled on socks and shoes, "but only the small stuff slips my mind—like where I left the keys, whether I locked the door, that I'm out of milk...."

Dr. Jessup, a radiologist at County General Hospital, was a gentle man, and quiet, although he had never before been *this*

quiet.

Because I had not worn a T-shirt to bed, I plucked a white one from a drawer.

I have a few black T-shirts, but mostly white. In addition to a selection of blue jeans, I have two pair of white chinos.

This apartment provides only a small closet. Half of it is empty. So are the bottom drawers of my dresser.

I do not own a suit. Or a tie. Or shoes that need to be shined.

For cool weather, I own two crew-neck sweaters.

Once I bought a sweater vest. Temporary insanity. Realizing that I had introduced an unthinkable level of complexity to my wardrobe, I returned it to the store the next day.

My four-hundred-pound friend and mentor, P. Oswald Boone, has warned me that my sartorial style represents a serious threat to the apparel industry.

I've noted more than once that the articles in Ozzie's wardrobe are of such enormous dimensions that he keeps in business those fabric mills I might otherwise put in jeopardy.

Barefoot, Dr. Jessup wore cotton pajamas. They were wrinkled from the rigors of restless sleep.

"Sir, I wish you'd say something," I told him. "I really wish you would."

Instead of obliging me, the radiologist lowered his hands from his face, turned, and walked out of the bedroom.

I glanced at the wall above the bed. Framed behind glass is a card from a carnival fortune-telling machine. It promises you
ARE DESTINED TO BE TOGETHER FOREVER.

Each morning, I begin my day by reading those seven words. Each night, I read them again, sometimes more than once, before sleep, if sleep will come to me.

I am sustained by the certainty that life has meaning. As does death.

From a nightstand, I retrieved my cell phone. The first number on speed dial is the office of Wyatt Porter, chief of the Pico Mundo Police Department. The second is his home number. The third is his cell phone.

More likely than not, I would be calling Chief Porter, one place or another, before dawn.

In the living room, I turned on a light and discovered that Dr. Jessup had been standing in the dark, among the thrift-shop treasures with which the place is furnished.

When I went to the front door and opened it, he did not follow. Although he had sought my assistance, he couldn't find the courage for what lay ahead.

In the rufescent light from an old bronze lamp with a beaded shade, the eclectic decor—Stickley-style armchairs, plump Victorian footstools, Maxfield Parrish prints, carnival-glass vases—evidently appealed to him.

"No offense," I said, "but you don't belong here, sir."

Dr. Jessup silently regarded me with what might have been supplication.

"This place is filled to the brim with the past. There's room for Elvis and me, and memories, but not for anyone new."

I stepped into the public hall and pulled the door shut.

My apartment is one of two on the first floor of a converted Victorian house. Once a rambling single-family home, the place still offers considerable charm.

For years I lived in one rented room above a garage. My bed had been just a few steps from my refrigerator. Life was simpler then, and the future clear.

I traded that place for this not because I needed more space, but because my heart is here now, and forever.

The front door of the house featured an oval of leaded glass. The night beyond looked sharply beveled and organized into a pattern that anyone could understand.

When I stepped onto the porch, this night proved to be like all others: deep, mysterious, trembling with the potential for chaos.

From porch steps to flagstone path, to public sidewalk, I looked around for Dr. Jessup but didn't see him.

In the high desert, which rises far east beyond Pico Mundo, winter can be chilly, while our low-desert nights remain mild

even in February. The curbside Indian laurels sighed and whispered in the balmy wind, and moths soared to street lamps.

The surrounding houses were as quiet as their windows were dark. No dogs barked. No owls hooted.

No pedestrians were out, no traffic on the streets. The town looked as if the Rapture had occurred, as if only I had been left behind to endure the reign of Hell on Earth.

By the time I reached the corner, Dr. Jessup rejoined me. His pajamas and the lateness of the hour suggested that he had come to my apartment from his home on Jacaranda Way, five blocks north in a better neighborhood than mine. Now he led me in that direction.

He could fly, but he plodded. I ran, drawing ahead of him.

Although I dreaded what I would find no less than he might have dreaded revealing it to me, I wanted to get to it quickly. As far as I knew, a life might still be in jeopardy.

Halfway there, I realized that I could have taken the Chevy. For most of my driving life, having no car of my own, I borrowed from friends as needed. The previous autumn, I had inherited a 1980 Chevrolet Camaro Berlinetta Coupe.

Often I still act as though I have no wheels. Owning a few thousand pounds of vehicle oppresses me when I think about it too much. Because I try not to think about it, I sometimes forget I have it.

Under the cratered face of the blind moon, I ran.

On Jacaranda Way, the Jessup residence is a white- brick Georgian with elegant ornamentation. It is flanked by a delightful American Victorian with so many decorative moldings that it resembles a wedding cake, and by a house that is baroque in all the wrong ways.

None of these architectural styles seems right for the desert, shaded by palm trees, brightened by climbing bougainvillea. Our town was founded in 1900 by newcomers from the East Coast, who fled the harsh winters but brought with them cold-climate architecture and attitude.

Terri Stambaugh, my friend and employer, owner of the Pico

Mundo Grille, tells me that this displaced architecture is better than the dreary acres of stucco and graveled roofs in many California desert towns.

I assume that she is right. I have seldom crossed the city line of Pico Mundo and have never been beyond the boundaries of Maravilla County.

My life is too full to allow either a jaunt or a journey. I don't even watch the Travel Channel.

The joys of life can be found anywhere. Far places only offer exotic ways to suffer.

Besides, the world beyond Pico Mundo is haunted by strangers, and I find it difficult enough to cope with the dead who, in life, were known to me.

Upstairs and down, soft lamplight shone at some windows of the Jessup residence. Most panes were dark.

By the time I reached the foot of the front-porch steps, Dr. Wilbur Jessup waited there.

The wind stirred his hair and ruffled his pajamas, although why he should be subject to the wind, I do not know. The moonlight found him, too, and shadow.

The grieving radiologist needed comforting before he could summon sufficient strength to lead me into his house, where he himself no doubt lay dead, and perhaps another.

I embraced him. Only a spirit, he was invisible to everyone but me, yet he felt warm and solid.

Perhaps I see the dead affected by the weather of this world, and see them touched by light and shadow, and find them as warm as the living, not because this is the way they are but because this is the way I want them to be. Perhaps by this device, I mean to deny the power of death.

My supernatural gift might reside not in my mind but instead in my heart. The heart is an artist that paints over what profoundly disturbs it, leaving on the canvas a less dark, less sharp version of the truth.

Dr. Jessup had no substance, but he leaned heavily upon me, a weight. He shook with the sobs that he could not voice.

The dead don't talk. Perhaps they know things about death

that the living are not permitted to learn from them.

In this moment, my ability to speak gave me no advantage. Words would not soothe him.

Nothing but justice could relieve his anguish. Perhaps not even justice.

When he'd been alive, he had known me as Odd Thomas, a local character. I am regarded by some people—wrongly—as a hero, as an eccentric by nearly everyone.

Odd is not a nickname; it's my legal handle.

The story of my name is interesting, I suppose, but I've told it before. What it boils down to is that my parents are dysfunctional. Big-time.

I believe that in life Dr. Jessup had found me intriguing, amusing, puzzling. I think he had liked me.

Only in death did he know me for what I am: a companion to the lingering dead.

I see them and wish I did not. I cherish life too much to turn the dead away, however, for they deserve my compassion by virtue of having suffered this world.

When Dr. Jessup stepped back from me, he had changed. His wounds were now manifest.

He had been hit in the face with a blunt object, maybe a length of pipe or a hammer. Repeatedly. His skull was broken, his features distorted.

Torn, cracked, splintered, his hands suggested that he had desperately tried to defend himself—or that he had come to the aid of someone. The only person living with him was his son, Danny.

My pity was quickly exceeded by a kind of righteous rage, which is a dangerous emotion, clouding judgment, precluding caution.

In this condition, which I do not seek, which frightens me, which comes over me as though I have been possessed, I can't turn away from what must be done. I plunge.

My friends, those few who know my secrets, think my compulsion has a divine inspiration. Maybe it's just temporary

insanity.

Step to step, ascending, then crossing the porch, I considered phoning Chief Wyatt Porter. I worried, however, that Danny might perish while I placed the call and waited for the authorities.

The front door stood ajar.

I glanced back and saw that Dr. Jessup preferred to haunt the yard instead of the house. He lingered in the grass.

His wounds had vanished. He appeared as he had appeared before Death had found him—and he looked scared.

Until they move on from this world, even the dead can know fear. You would think they have nothing to lose, but sometimes they are wretched with anxiety, not about what might lie Beyond, but about those whom they have left behind.

I pushed the door inward. It moved as smoothly, as silently as the mechanism of a well-crafted, spring-loaded trap.

ARTIST'S SKETCHBOOK

This is the second graphic novel to star Odd Thomas, following *In Odd We Trust*. In that first book, artist Queenie Chan established the visual appearance of Odd, Stormy, and Chief Porter. In *Odd Is On Our Side*, her challenge was to come up with the look of another major character, bestselling mystery novelist Ozzie Boone, as well as his New York editor, Valerie Malavont.



MERYL STREEP LOOKALIKE. NEW YORK LITERARY TYPE.

Ms. Malavont was approved right away, but Ozzie proved to pose a challenge!



FOR SOME STRANGE REASON, I THOUGHT OZZIE WAS BLACK. AFTER IT WAS CONFIRMED THAT HE WASN'T, I REREAD THE BOOKS—AND WHILE THERE WAS NOTHING THERE THAT SAID OZZIE WAS BLACK, I DIDN'T SPOT ANYTHING THAT SAID HE WAS WHITE, EITHER. SINCE OZZIE WAS KNOWN FOR BEING SAGACIOUS, I PROBABLY SUBCONSCIOUSLY THOUGHT OF HIM AS MORPHEUS FROM THE MATRIX MOVIES (HENCE WHY HE WAS BLACK IN MY MIND).

Dean's immediate comment was that Ozzie is not black. Queenie wrote back,

“For some reason I've always imagined him as dark-skinned. I guess I've had this image of Ozzie in my mind from the start of reading *Odd Thomas*, and couldn't separate myself from it. I'm perfectly happy to do a redesign.”

The second sketch wasn't right either.



WHEN IT TURNED OUT THAT OZZIE LOOKED MORE LIKE ORSON WELLES, I IMMEDIATELY ASSUMED HE LOOKED LIKE THE OLDER, MORE INTENSE ORSON (RATHER THAN THE YOUNGER VERSION). HOWEVER, I PERSONALLY DIDN'T FEEL THIS IMAGE SUITED THE CHARACTER OF OZZIE (AND INDEED, IT DIDN'T REALLY).

“All we know about Ozzie’s appearance is that he’s HUGE, and not much more,” Queenie wrote after this sketch was rejected. “Perhaps Dean can suggest another celebrity who looks like Ozzie, like he did with Valerie and Chief Porter. That makes it *infinitely* easier.”

Dean replied: “Ozzie Boone is in his late forties, weighs 400-plus pounds, and has a sweet but not babyish face. Herewith several photos of the comedian Lou Costello. He was not as heavy as Ozzie, but his face is a good place to begin. He had a sweet pudgy face but in his way he was handsome, too. His hair would work well for Ozzie, also.”



*THIS FINAL OZZIE SKETCH, BASED ON LOU COSTELLO, WAS DEFINITELY THE ONE I
LIKED THE MOST.*

Queenie put pen to paper once again, and the final result was approved.

* * *

THE GREAT BODACH STRUGGLE

The other artistic challenge in *Odd Is On Our Side* was that of the bodachs, the supernatural heralds of death and disaster. The bodachs feature heavily in the Odd Thomas books, and yet they proved difficult to render in a way that communicates the menace and evil they embody in the novels. Here is Queenie's first attempt:



This proved to have too much of a specific form. Dean described the bodachs as slinky, wolfish shadows that flow from place to place. He asked Queenie to try again.



Still not quite right. This guidance came back:

“Delete all the curlicues. This design element makes the creature seem too cute and almost friendly. It takes away from the menace they are supposed to convey. Imagine what it would look like if you drop black ink in a pan of water. There would be no pattern to how the ink moves in the water from time to time. Rather, it’s an amorphous blob shifting.”

BECAUSE THE FIRST SKETCH WAS TOO “PRECISE,” I DECIDED TO DRAW THE NEXT TWO SKETCHES AS LOOSELY AS I COULD.

BUT AS IT TURNED OUT, BODACHS HAD NO DEFINITE SHAPE SINCE THEY LOOKED MORE LIKE BLOTCHES OF INK FLOATING

IN WATER, SO I JUST DECIDED TO DRAW THEM DIRECTLY
ONTO THE PAGES.



This final version was approved. Said Queenie: “It’s hard to make a shape-shifting blob look menacing ... so I gave them glowing eyes.”

SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

Adaptor Fred Van Lente had the task of turning Dean's story for *Odd Is On Our Side* into a panel-by-panel script. Questions came up as he did so, not all of which could be answered by reference to the novels. Odd fans will be interested to learn these details.

Fred: Does Odd automatically know the identity of every ghost he comes into contact with?

Dean: When Odd looks at the lingering spirit of someone he didn't know in life, he has to figure out who they are by the context of their apparition (as, for example, the various ghosts in the burnt-out casino in *Forever Odd*). He does *not* automatically intuit the spirits identity.

Fred: Can Odd tell at first glance whether someone is a ghost?



Dean: Odd knows a ghost is a ghost only if he knew the dead person or if the apparition displays its mortal wounds. As in the first book in the series—with “Fungus Man,” alias Bob Roberts—Odd sometimes can mistake a lingering spirit for a living person, until the entity is either unable to speak (the dead don't talk) or does something ghostlike, such as walk through a wall, whereupon Odd knows with what he's dealing.

The ghost has no aura or identifying essence. Of course, if Odd sees someone but Stormy or another living person *doesn't* see them, Odd knows at once that he's seeing a ghost.

OZZIE BOONE



The script introduced Dean's character Ozzie Boone, bestselling novelist, to graphic novel readers for the first time, and Dean wanted to make sure that the Ozzie readers meet in this book is the same in all details as the Ozzie we get to know and love in the novels. In the first-draft script, Fred included a few lines indicating that Ozzie knew how to defuse the bomb inside the spider piñata because of research he'd undertaken to write a book series about a police bomb squad expert named Paddy McSorely. Dean wrote back:

Dear Fred,

Ozzie's famous detective series are described in *Odd Thomas*, in chapter sixteen: The first is about a very "fat detective of incomparable brilliance who solves crimes while tossing off hilarious bon mots. He relies on his beautiful and highly athletic wife (who utterly adores him) to undertake all the investigative footwork and to perform all the derring-do." The second series involves "a likable heroine in spite of numerous neuroses and bulimia." Ozzie proudly—and slyly—proclaims that no novels in the history of literature have featured so much vomiting to the delight of so many readers. I want to avoid adding character facts that contradict those in the books, so I'd like to avoid this series about Boston Bomb Squad inspector Paddy McSorely. Being a mystery writer and a demon for detail, Ozzie will know something about bombs when he needs to act late in the story; he should just mention, at the time, having written a story about a mad bomber.

THE VILLAIN

Early in the process, Fred proposed a religion-based motive for Norman Turley, the villain of *Odd Is On Our Side*, to have poisoned a number of trick-or-treaters. Dean responded with this:

The Odd Thomas stories try to avoid both politically correct villains and needlessly negative characterizations of whole groups. Consequently, I would like to see Norman Turley *not* be a crazy Christian trying to warn people about a “pagan” holiday. Maybe make him the owner of a flower shop and a neighborhood greenhouse who got tired of having his windows soaped by trick-or-treaters. Then he might use a plant poison to contaminate the candy he gave out.

Dean provided helpful details about what type of poison would work best for such a plan:



Strychnine is almost too powerful a poison for this. It's a Class 6 toxin, with a victim-reaction time of ten to twenty minutes, and faster in children. It wouldn't be logical to assume that most—or in fact *any*—of the kids who ate that candy survived. Better to go with something like the seeds of corn cockle—a Class 4 toxin—which would give authorities time to recognize the symptoms as those of poisoning and time for physicians to successfully treat the victims. Corn cockle is sometimes grown as an ornamental plant. If Norman Turley *was* a florist/greenhouse operator, he

might use corn cockle as filler in some flower arrangements and would know the power of the seeds. It might be fun if he was caught because the symptoms of poisoned children—nausea, acute gastroenteritis, fever, giddiness, delirium, weakness, depressed breathing, sharp pains in the spine—were reminiscent of those Turley's wife suffered before *she* died three years before the little girl who was costumed as a ghost. Mrs. Turley was thought to have died of anaphylactic shock caused by an unspecified allergic reaction. But when Turley replayed the trick on the kids, Wyatt Porter made the connection.

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